A Moonshiner's Folly

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A Moonshiner's Folly

and OTHER STORIES

BY

HANNIBAL ALBERT COMPTON

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DEDICATION

To My Lifelong Friend,

JOHN H. MATNEY,

who, unlike most other mountaineers, sees the grandeur and glory of the hills; who exults in spring at the twitter of nesting birds; who enjoys the summer and the beauty thereof, and reads the lesson of the falling leaf; who loves Nature, her God, her works, her laws, and who loves all these in loving his fellow man—who serves these by serving man. To him this book is dedicated in grateful remembrance by the author.

FOREWORD

The last decade has witnessed a great awakening in the hills—both moral and intellectual. Schools and books are increasing rapidly, and nowhere else is knowledge acquired with greater facility than in the Southern mountains. Some of the brightest geniuses of all time have, for lack of advantage, gone uncultured and untutored through life, and many of these have ended their existence in the penitentiary or on the gallows. For more than a century the mountaineer has been almost secure from the law, and the imperfections peculiar to all mankind have induced him to take advantage of his isolation. On the average, the mountaineer has been the pioneer living out of season. For years the pioneer's life has been his life. A century worked few changes in mountain environments.

Born and reared in log cabins, with huge cracks and great open fire-places, he has suffered none from bad ventilation. Strangers to society, the women have never been the victims to tight lacing, but have grown up strong and robust, as a woman should.

The mountaineer obeys one Scriptural command, at least: "Be fruitful and multi-

ply;" hence, one reason for health and poverty. After more than a hundred years of living close to Nature, what else could be expected but a strong, powerful race? A strong body is a good house for a healthy soul to live in; therefore, it is only natural that, within a very short time, a great race of intellectual as well as physical giants must people the old hills.

The day of the mountain man has already dawned. He is already making his mark. The mountain boy goes out to the university and carries home the medal. The mountain girl, with her natural beauty, her roses fanned by mountain breezes, becomes acquainted with society, and captures the heart of the aristocrat. In this way the health and strength of the hills is being diffused into the outside world.

Time is now beginning to work changes—almost incredible changes. The fierce old feudist and clansman is no more. The strong arm of law has pierced the once impenetrable barriers of rhododendron and cliff and reached right into the lair of the moonshiner and dragged the offender out. A great reformation is progressing. The mountain population is fast growing to be a most potent factor in the country's civilization.

Some writers have made it appear that pure love is almost unknown in the hills. But such is not the case. In no other section is there less sexual vice. No other place in the world can boast of a higher

class of female virtue or maternal chastity. Lewdness is the one unpardonable sin with all respectable mountain mothers. Freedom of the sexes has, indeed, a very narrow scope with them.

In the stories contained in this volume I have endeavored to paint mountain life as it is. All the heroes, being just plain natives of the hills, have accomplished nothing extraordinary. None have yet risen to dizzy heights of fame; but some are filling very important posts. Some have been elected to Congress, and a few may have been chosen Governor of their respective states; but such are rare exceptions. The dialect used in these tales is a true reproduction. My characters speak it just as it is spoken in the section in which the scenes are laid.

"The Legend of Oakview" and "The Spook Chimney" do not properly belong to this collection. I have used them merely to swell the volume to a uniform thickness. All the others are mere glimpses of the crude civilization of the hills. In handling the subjects, I have tried to be true and impartial; therefore, with the hope of pleasing the reading public, and with some apprehensions, I must confess, I submit this little "Sketch Book" of mountain life.

The Author.

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A MOONSHINER'S FOLLY.

CHAPTER I.

WHEN the stars had come out, she went as usual to the old grave-yard on top of the Knob. Two sisters and a brother had been laid up there to rest before she was born, and just a year ago her mother, heart-broken and weary, had been buried there.

Her father would not be at home that night. Floyd had come to take his supper, and they would stay at the distillery. She could stay at her mother's grave as long as she wished. The Knob rose almost abruptly above the cabin and the grave-yard was on its summit.

She reached the gate panting and flushed from her climb. Before entering, she paused and looked over the wretched palings at the neglected graves. A hog, frightened at her approach, uttered a fierce grunt and disappeared in the brush.

When she reached the grave, she sat down on a sandstone, wrapped her skirt tightly about her bare legs, and began to sing: "O, Father, do not ask me why the tears roll down my cheeks."

The night was warm and nearly still. On every slight breeze the sweet perfume of roses was wafted to her from little Tommie Garland's grave. Uncle Jack had inclosed his baby's grave with a nice paling, and had planted roses inside the inclosure. Would her own father ever do the same to show his respect for his and her loved ones? No; he seemed to care nothing for them nor for her. He would do nothing but make mean whiskey; and, worse than that, he had got Floyd interested in that ruinous trade. She had talked and talked to them, and it made her want to lie down by her mother to think that her advice was so coldly ignored. Child as she was, Flora Winston never tired of admonishing her erring father and wayward brother against their sinful folly.

From her position she could look down the dark cove to her right and see the light from the distillery. How it glared up at her through the darkness! Her blood froze at the thought of her loved ones down there in that deep, dark hole—hell.

As she sat there she thought it would be much better if they were sleeping there by her angel mother.

Again she repeated the lines of "The Drunkard's Child," and dampened her dress with tears. She turned uneasily and looked over at the Divide. Uncle Jack Garland's house was darkly outlined against the pale

sky. On beyond the Divide the hills of West Virginia stretched in limitless acres, but lay dark under a moonless sky. A strange, vague foreboding of fear had somehow taken possession of her, but she feared not for herself.

She wiped her eyes on her sleeve and looked blankly into the black shadows of the surrounding woods. A whippoorwill perched himself on the paling and began to whistle out his weird song. An owl thundered in his voice of terror on the Divide, and myriads of fireflies filled the air with their tiny candles.

Now and then she thought she could hear low thunder. The sound came nearer. She strained her eyes looking vainly down the intersecting spur, but could see nothing. She knew not why, but she was frightened. All day that vague, nameless fear had haunted her, and now she was growing almost frantic. It was plain now that the sounds were of hoofs, for their clatter could be distinctly heard on the hard clay path. For a few minutes the hoof-beats ceased, then six dark horsemen glided noiselessly by the dilapidated cemetery. A little beyond the corner all rode into the bushes and tethered their horses. After an inaudible consultation, they returned to the path and began to grope their way down the peak.

"Who can they be," said the child to her-

self. She could not remember seeing so many come together to the still before; and then why did they leave their horses on top? Others had always ridden down. It was all to her a little strange, and yet nothing very remarkable after all. They were now almost down to the still. A thought came to her which took her breath; and, painful as it was, she was angry with herself because it had not come sooner. For a moment she stood with speechless horror gazing with set eyes into the cove.

"The Revenues, the Revenues," she screamed, but scarcely had these words escaped her lips when she heard the awful words: "Halt, hold; you are our prisoners."

"The Revenues, the Revenues," she repeated, frantically wringing her hands. "Oh, they'll kill daddy an' Floyd jest like they did pore ole Lilburn Jones. Lord o' mercy; oh!—" And then she fell fainting.

Hastily the distilling apparatus was destroyed and the whiskey emptied—a large amount into the stomachs of the officers. Everything being in readiness, the "revenues," with their prisoners securely handcuffed, started up the steep path. The climb was less fatiguing than it would have been had they not found that strength-giving fluid—Mont Winston's "mountain dew."

"Let us stop at the house," said the captured moonshiner, "I want to let Flora know."

"Come along, old man," returned one of the officers; "we have no time for fooling. You can send back word to your folks by some o' your neighbors you're likely to see before morning."

Mont obeyed the officer, and after a few minutes of hard climbing, captors and captives stood by the horses. As the moonshiner passed the graveyard, handcuffed and pinioned to a horse, he looked over the palings at a mound of yellow earth, and a large tear rolled down his rugged cheek. Had he seen the prostrate form of his child lying there by the mound, it might have been left to the strength of the ropes to prevent his falling to the ground. He lifted his shackled hands and wiped his eyes, looked down into the cove that for months had been his home, and tried to be satisfied with his fate. As the cavalcade rounded a curve in the path, two men stepped from behind a tree and walked in silence before the horses. About two miles down the ridge the horses were tied to a rickety fence, and the two men led the way into a log cabin.

* * * * * * * * *

When Flora regained consciousness, everything about her was quiet. The whippoorwill had flown; the owl had hushed, but

the fireflies continued to streak the air with light. A few smouldering brands could still be distinguished through the bushes lying around the ruined distillery. She thought that she had awakened from a terrible dream. She remembered having heard the awful words: "Halt, hold; you are our prisoners," and then she knew it to be a reality. She uttered a frenzied groan and sat down on the stone to think. The officers had caught her father and brother at the still and had carried them away. Yes, they had carried them away, and would put them in jail where they would be kept until their trial. And then, where would they go? This was her father's third offense and Floyd's second. Twice had her father been sentenced to jail, and twice had he stayed there until he had almost died for want of fresh air.

Mont Winston was a mountaineer, and confinement, to him, was worse than the cage is to the bird. Floyd had been there once, too, and had come back wan and pale. This time they might be sent away to a terrible prison. She could not remember its name, but she called it the "pen." Yes, they would be sent, most surely, to the pen, and for several years perhaps. What would become of her? The neighbors would send her to the poorhouse. Yes, to the poorhouse; and she would rather go with Mont and Floyd to the pen than go

there. Oh, a thousand times to the pen, rather than go to the poorhouse. She wished she had gone down to the still and helped her father. If she had done that, they would have taken her away with him and Floyd. But no, they would not have sent her to the pen, for she was only a little girl; and, besides, that would have been her first offense. She was now glad she had not been there.

A sudden thought came to her: Uncle Jack had always liked her father. Yes, they had always been friends; and since her father and Morgan Lambert had dissolved partnership, Uncle Jack Garland had been his *only* friend. The old man had not been friendly to his trade, but had been constantly trying to persuade him to give up making whiskey and go to work as he once did. And now she would go to Uncle Jack's. Perhaps he could do something. His house was just over on the Divide, but the night was too dark and the woods were too rough to go across the cove. She must go around the ridge, and it was fully three miles around. Utterly disregarding her own safety, she leaped like a hare and ran swiftly up the narrow road. Before she had gone a mile, she thought she would be obliged to lie down and give it all up; but that terrible prison and the cruel poorhouse flashed into her mind and urged her on faster than ever. Up hill and down she

sped, her long, beautiful hair standing out behind. When she came to the old schoolhouse at the forks of the road, she paused. How her heart pounded in her breast! It seemed that hundreds of tiny hearts were beating all over her body. Her face was aflame and the perspiration streamed down and hurt her eyes. A faint illumination in the east heralded the coming of the moon, and a screech owl called in his strange, shivering tones down in Deerlick Hollow. She was still in sight of Uncle Jack's and a light was shining through the window. She thought she could hear the sweet strains of Uncle Jack's violin, but perhaps it was a ringing in her ears.

She started again and soon descended the long slant that led down from the old schoolhouse. She had a mile yet to go, and that was up hill the greater part of the way. Could she ever get there? She feared not; but, with rapid-beating heart and bulging veins, she labored on. To her left she could now see the Knob. The old graveyard was white with moonlight. How black the two tall cedars looked standing over there like lonely guards for the dead!

As she passed the barn, Uncle Jack's big black horses nickered to her. That was the last sound she heard until morning. A long slant led from the barn up to the house. Reaching the door, she fell on her face inside.

"Lord o' mercy," exclaimed Aunt Nellie, dropping her pipe, "what's the matter with the child?"

"Somethin's up," said Uncle Jack, laying aside his Bible and going to the fainting child. He lifted her limp form from the floor and laid her on the bed.

"Let me git the camphire quick," said Aunt Nellie. She went to the tall mantel and brought a bottle of camphor which she uncorked and held to the child's nose.

"Thank the Lord," said the kind old woman, "she's a-comin' to."

But Flora never opened her eyes. She began to breathe with apparent ease, but lay in a stupor until morning.

"Jack," said Aunt Nellie, "wake Roy up an' send him over to Mont's to see what's the matter. Mont has either got killed or the revenues has got him. Oh, ain't this awful, ain't this awful?" And a tear rolled down her kind old face.

The boy was fast asleep, but the old man soon aroused him, and he was ready to start.

Roy was a stout, handsome lad of fifteen, with intelligent, laughing eyes and chestnut brown hair. His broad, manly forehead gave evidence of a strong brain behind. Though broad-shouldered and square, he stood erect and had a very graceful walk which everybody admired. His obedience to his parents, his unselfish devotion to his

twin sister, Maude, and his kindness to his playmates had won him a place high in the estimation of all the neighbors except old Josiah Martin, a very pious man in his own eyes, who hated all the Garlands because Uncle Jack kept a fiddle and sometimes invited the young people to his house to dance.

The boy started instantly to the moonshiner's cabin; and, reaching it, found it deserted. Then, going down to the distillery, he knew the truth. As he passed the cabin on his return, a man stepped from the door with something on his shoulder and moved silently up the path before him. All the way around the Divide he tried to think who it could be plundering the unfortunate moonshiner's cabin.

After an absence of two hours, he returned and rehearsed to his parents what he had learned: The still had been cut; the tubs had been destroyed; the still house had been torn down, and everything was plain enough that Mont and Floyd had been arrested and carried away. But one mystery could not be unraveled: None could see why anybody had the right to plunder a man's house, even if he *was* a moonshiner.

Neither Uncle Jack, Aunt Nellie nor Roy slept any more that night. All sat in the room with the insensible child until the sun brought to earth another summer day.

CHAPTER II.

FROM Uncle Jack's house one may look for miles and miles out over rugged mountains covered with verdant forests; and a glorious sight it was the morning after the arrest, when the sun peeped over Great Flat-top Mountain, scattering the heavy fog into chaos and illuminating the intervening hills and hollows with a fire of impenetrable brilliance. The sky was absolutely clear, and when the fog had been driven away, the summer birds began to pour out their notes of gladness.

Flora had roused from her stupor, but gave signs of intense suffering and unconsciousness. Aunt Nellie prepared a cot for the child on the shady porch, and Uncle Jack tenderly laid her on it. The cool morning air seemed to soothe her for a time. She lay perfectly still, with her blue eyes fixed on the old man as he tuned his violin.

Uncle Jack looked a pleasing type of the better class of mountaineers as he held his instrument upright on his knee. He had already lived out his allotted three score and ten, but was quite active and vigorous. He wore a short, snow-white beard and long

hair, which, however, had not suffered so much from the bleaching of many years. Aunt Nellie sat by the cot calmly smoking her pipe. Now and then a beautiful female figure tripped noiselessly about the house. This was their only girl—Roy's twin sister.

When his violin was in readiness, the old man drew his bow slowly across the strings a few times, and then began to play "Home, Sweet Home." The sweet, tender melody floated out and tranquilized all who heard it. Roy, who was at work in the field, involuntarily stopped the horse in the furrow and listened to the music so sweet and touching. A red bird, who had been warning Uncle Jack of coming rain, flew away ashamed of his voice.

When the old man stopped playing, Flora raised her head. Aunt Nellie wiped her eyes on her apron. The old man looked at her, and her eyes were overflowing with tears.

"Oh, Jack," she said, "that bow teches my heart jest the same as it does the strings on the fiddle. 'Home, sweet home,' it says; but this pore little child ain't got no home. She's got no mother, no father, no people—oh, Jack, ain't it awful? Our children have allus had a home, and humble as it is, it has kept them comfortable. But this pore little thing, if she don't die, ain't got no place to go. Jack, we must not let her go

to the porehouse—we kin take keer of her."

"Jest as you say, Nellie," returned the old man kindly.

The suffering child turned her big blue eyes wistfully toward the old couple and said, "Have I been asleep? I heerd mother a-singing' in Heaven. I heerd her a-singin' an' a-playin' on her golden harp. She was a-singin' 'Home, sweet Home.' That's the song she allus loved so well. What a sweet home Heaven must be. I wish I could go there to mother, but I don't guess they'd let me come there, fer I'm a drunkard's child. They might not 'a' let *her* come, but Daddy was not so bad then. Oh, Daddy *is* a bad man; but I hope he'll quit drinkin' an' stillin', an, then me an' him can go to mother in Heaven."

"Pore little gal," said old Jack, and a tear glistened in one of his eyes.

The red bird came back to resume his warning. A humming bird buzzed around the morning-glories on the porch railing, and a cat-bird squeaked in his piping voice down in the orchard. The sun had climbed nearly to his zenith. The intense heat had absorbed the moisture of field and forest, leaving the earth dry and the corn wilting. Flora had become quiet, and the utmost silence reigned over the farm. Old Jack was lighting his pipe when an angry "gee" came up from the Divide road. Going to the corner of the house, he saw Morgan

Lambert and his stalwart son Jake coming up the ridge. Their old mule was hitched to a sled and Jake was driving. Morgan walked behind. When they came up to the gate, Morgan called out: "Hello, Uncle Jackson, I wish ye'd come down an' he'p urs a little. We've got a wounded boy here, an' he wanted to be fotch aroun' here to you. Of course, hit may look a little bad fer ye to keep 'im, as he's a moonshinin' drunkard; but I don't see jest how ye can turn 'im off, fer they've got his pap an' gone with 'im, an' he aint got nobody to see to 'im. I would 'a' kep' 'im myself, but as I'm a church-member,—ye know me an' Jake both j'ined at the last revival at the schoolhouse—an, as I thought it waren't becomin' of a Christian to have sich a boy in his house, I hav fotch 'im to yo' place. I knowed you didn't claim to have no religion; so I 'lowed you wouldn't mind to keep the boy a spell."

Morgan lifted his hat and scratched his bald head, then continued: "The revenues, they stayed at my house last night—they did—an' along in the night Floyd tried to get away from 'em, an' Mr. Field, one o' the officers, shot 'im a little to keep 'im from runnin.'"

Roy had now come up. "Who done this?" he asked sternly, looking down at the pale face of his friend.

"Well, Roy," returned Morgan, "you

know none of urs ever gits perfect. Hit's a little bad to tell on the revenues, but, as I'm a church member, an' a-tryin' to live right—God bein' my Helper—I'm a-goin' to tell the truth. The revenues, they all got drunk— but you couldn't blame 'em murch fer it, fer it was on Mont's own licker. Hit's quite nateral 'at he should suffer from hit's consequences. I aint murch of a Scriptorian, but I b'lieve the Good Book says if a feller digs a pit fer another feller to fall in, he will fall in it his se'f. Now, if Mont likes Floyd ha'f as well as I do Jake thar, hit'll hurt him wusser 'an ef hit had been him shot."

"When did you quit diggin' pits, Morg?" asked Roy with sarcasm.

For a moment Morgan's face wore a mixture of anger and surprise. "Ef stillin' is what ye mean," he answered, "I've quit good six months ago."

"That was what I meant," said Roy, "for I thought that was what you meant when you was talkin' about Mont."

"Well," explained Morgan, "I quit good six months ago—I had quit a right smart while before I j'ined the Church."

"You quit when you and Mont Winston fell out and dissolved partnership," said Roy with warmth.

"What wuz we pardners in?" retorted Morgan.

"Why," returned Roy, "ain't it a fact that you and Mont was partners for a long time in that big still that you hauled from Wyoming in a sled? Have you forgot all about you and Mont and Floyd and big saintly Jake there a-stillin' up all the corn you all had, and how you come dad-burned nigh starvin' to death the next spring?"

"That's my business," said Morgan with rage.

"I know it is, Morg," said Roy, "but come on and let's carry Floyd in before you lose your religion."

Morgan made no reply, and in a short time Floyd had been laid on the bed.

"An' the Lord have mercy on us all," exclaimed Aunt Nellie. "Two o' Mon't children at th p'int o' death, an' him a-lookin' right into the doors of the penitentiary."

"Mother," said Roy, "the officers got drunk and shot Floyd. What do you think of such officers?"

"God deliver me from sich officers," answered the old woman. "They're worse than the prisoners. Mont Winston was a good-hearted man, an' stillin' is the worst thing I ever knowed him to be guilty uv. Floyd here—pore boy—had the example set before him, an' I'm goin' to put all the blame on Mont."

Roy laughed. "Mother," he said, "you'll offend Morg, for you know he used to be a moonshiner."

"Yes, but I reckon Morgan's quit for good."

"That's what I've done, young man," said Lambert, "an' thar aint no danger of yer ma offendin' me, but I won't be so shore about you."

"Now, Morg," said the boy, "if you don't quit gettin' mad so easy, you'll have to go back and get the circuit-rider to pour some more water on your head."

Morgan turned scarlet, but said nothing.

After he had teased Morgan until he could hardly hold his anger, he turned to Jake and said: "What was that you toted out o' Mont's house last night on your shoulders?"

Jake shuffled his feet uneasily, and, rising from his chair, said, "Let's be a-goin', pap."

"That ain't answerin' my question," persisted Roy. "What was that you carried out of Mont's house last night on your shoulder?"

"I—I never—I never carried nothin' out, did I pap?" stammered Jake. "I weren't thar—I'll swear I weren't—was I, pap?" And he began to move awkwardly toward the door.

"No; Jake was at home all last night," said Morgan, pulling his tight overalls down over his crooked shins, and rising.

"Come over, Uncle Jack," he said, stepping out.

"Better stay till after dinner, Morgan," said the old man.

"Murch erbleeged, we've stayed too long now," and with this, he and his tall son went down to the gate. Turning the mule and sled before them, they started home.

Roy went to the window and watched them until they were out of sight. When they were gone, he felt that two of the worst characters in the hills had just been in his home.

"I can see through Morg," he said, stepping away from the window. "He brought the revenues to his house and showed them Mont's still because he don't like him. And I can see through that big gander-shanked Jake. He is the one I saw comin' out of Mont's house last night, and it was a keg of whiskey he had on his shoulder. And it was on this whiskey that the revenues got drunk."

Floyd, who had been sleeping since he had been brought into the house, had awakened. "That's jest hit," he said. "Morg an' Jake both come to the top of the hill yan side of the graveyard with 'em, fer they was waiting fer 'em behind a tree, an' they took 'em right to their house. The revenues got purty full down at the still before they started with us, but when we got to Morg's, they wanted more. Dad told 'em whar they could find it, an' they sent Jake atter it. He thought if he could git 'em all

down drunk, we mought git away. So they drunk it down like water an' they all laid down on the floor. I thought they was all asleep, an' was jest about to git the door open when that Fields boy—the little devil —shot me in the thigh."

After dinner old Jack picked up his violin and again took his seat on the porch. For an hour the melodious notes thrilled all that heard them.

The evening was intensely hot. Bright thunder clouds swelled up in the west. A few muttering groans and a cooling breeze told that a storm was approaching. Numerous small clouds joined forces, and soon the western sky was a solid mass of dark mist. The light of the sun was shut out, and the black cloud was streaked with lightning. The rumbling mass rolled steadily on, and soon the storm burst down in all its fury. The wind blew in hurricanes, and great trees were torn from the ground by its force. The air became almost as dark as night. Vivid lightning flashed and deafening thunder crashed, shaking the house to its foundation.

The storm, furious as it was, was but a zephyr when compared with that which raged in the wounded boy's heart. Bitter remorse, shame and regrets surged in his soul. Oh, that he had listened to his sister! But it was vain to wish. It was too late now. He had been caught at the still, and

now he must necessarily go to the penitentiary to pay the penalty of his folly. And, besides, he was dangerously shot. That was a cowardly act. He knew that; but what had been the cause? Their still had led to it all. Remorse tortured him; his leg pained him much, and he rolled and tossed in bed.

Until long after the storm had abated, the rain continued to fall, but before sundown a gentle wind scattered the clouds into fragments. A rainbow appeared in the east and the sun set in a cloudless west. The earth in its dripping garments looked fresh and beautiful. A wood-thrush began his evening song down in the head of War Cove, and night, with all its sweetness and peace, settled again over the quiet hills.

CHAPTER III.

WHEN Morgan and Jake returned home, the "revenues" and their captive had gone. With deep regret, Mont watched the Great Divide fade from sight. He thought he would be a much older man before he should see it again. Often, as he trudged handcuffed before the officers, he thought of his little girl who had always pleaded so patiently with him. Ah, had he heeded her words, he would not be the shackled, disgraced prisoner that he was. Often he turned his head to look at his familiar hills that were receding. Perhaps he was looking at them for his last time. A hard day's tramp lay before him, for he was allowed to ride but little; and when he *did* ride, he had to take the place behind one of the officers. No happiness stirred in the breast of the unfortunate man; all was regret and shame and bitter remorse. A hard fate awaited him, and he knew it; so he heaved a heavy sigh and went on in silence.

About sundown the little party rode into the county-seat, which contained the jail and court-house and a few straggling residences. The prisoner was locked securely

in jail. After a scanty meal he tried to sleep. His bed was hard, and fleas and bedbugs tortured him all night. But this was not the only reason for his sleeplessness. He was thinking of the cruel prison that awaited him. His way was now clear before him. He could trace it by the Chancery Commissioner and the United States Court, and from there to a cruel Federal prison in a far away Southern state. Then he thought again of his children. Floyd was shot, but he knew not how badly. He knew that if the boy recovered, *his* fate would be little less terrible than his own. What stung him so was the thought that he, himself, was responsible for all these calamities visited so sorely upon him. He thought of Flora, and her future troubled him greatly. He feared that the neighbors would suffer her to go to the poorhouse, and he would rather she would die, than be reduced to such circumstances.

Th officers had brought along with them a good supply of Mont's mean corn whiskey. After a hearty meal in the little hotel they proceeded to get very drunk. The unhappy man in the cell could hear their drunken revelry; and, for the first time in his life, he gave his unprejudiced judgment against the traffic which had brought him and his family to their ruin.

Morning dawned in glorious splendor; but little light was shed into the dingy cell

of the moonshiner, but less still into his sad soul. He went to the window and looked out over the little town. Everywhere he could see happy, contented people going cheerfully to their work. Well-fed, well-dressed children were romping in the streets. Then, in fancy, he saw his own little girl, shabbily-dressed and poorly fed; but he did not know that she was then dangerously ill. Without this knowledge his heart melted within him, and he looked between the rusted bars with tearful eyes. The jailer brought in his breakfast about eight o'clock, but he could not eat. He was sick and sin-tortured, and weakened by the loss of sleep. He turned sulkily from the officer, sat down on a stool and buried his face in his hands. The jailor left the food and closed the door with a bang; but the town clock struck nine, ten, eleven and twelve, and still the food remained untasted. All that morning he sat there bent down with remorse, thinking of the happiness that might have been his and contemplating his mournful future.

In the evening he was taken before the Chancery Commissioner; and being unable to give bail, he was again committed to jail to await the next term of United States Circuit Court, which convened at Abingdon in the coming August.

For several days he sat and gazed through the iron-barred window, regretting, think-

ing—thinking of his once happy home on the Divide. He could see himself as he once was—a strong, healthy young man. Then he would think of the graves on the Knob—the graves that held the dust of those who had loved him. Often he would stand and look through the bars, watching the pigeons circle round the court-house tower, and listen to their cooing as they strutted around their young. But all the while he was thinking, thinking. He lived over again his life. His recollections would go back to boyhood, and for a moment he would be happy. He lived again his early married life, before the illicit whiskey traffic had ruined him, and for moments together he would dwell, in fancy, with his young, happy wife. Then these fond recollections would vanish from his mind, and a great black gulf would roll up in their place. He looked into the abyss. He knew that his health was well nigh spent. Exposure to weather and the poisonous product of the still each had had a share in making him an invalid, and now trouble would give him the final blow.

One morning the news was brought him that Floyd and Flora were not expected to live. He listened calmly to the end of the story, and then, for the first time in his life, he bowed his head in prayer. Earnestly he confessed to his God that he was the most miserable of all creatures. He asked Him

to grant him forgiveness, if not too late, and to help him bear the burdens which were crushing him into the very earth. He ended with a fervent appeal for his wounded boy, asking Him to show the lad the error of his way and to lead him to the path of Life.

Days passed on, and still the moonshiner spent much time in prayer and meditation. He was entirely changed. He now hated the folly of the moonshiner as much as he had once loved it. But, notwithstanding his complete repentance, he was indicted before the grand jury at Abingdon; and, after a speedy trial, was sentenced five years to the Federal prison in Atlanta, Georgia.

CHAPTER IV.

MORNING found the wounded lad in a painful condition. His leg had become frightfully swollen and very feverish. The wound was much inflamed; and, from all indications, blood-poison had set in. All day Aunt Nellie had tried her good old household remedies, but to no avail. He continued to grow worse. Flora had had a good, long sleep, and she woke up much better.

Night came on and Floyd's condition was growing so alarming that it was decided to send for Dr. Reece. He had for a long time been the family physician for the Garlands; and had gained state-wide fame as a surgeon. He was located at Richlands, a distance of fifteen miles. Roy could make it there and back before daylight.

After a good supper, the boy mounted one of the big black horses and started in quest of the surgeon. All around the ridge he was thinking of the little sick girl who had come to his home for protection. He felt so sorry for her, that more than once his eyes became moist. He had known her since she was a tiny baby; but always, until tonight, she had been just the drunkard's

child—just the moonshiner's "little gal." His parents had always liked Mont, because he had once been a respectable citizen; but since he had become a moonshiner, they had had nothing for him but mild rebuke and the advice to go back to his old way of living. They had never given up hope that he would be brought ultimately to see the ruin he was bringing on himself and family, so they still respected him and said that he was a kind-hearted man, and that there were many worse than he, even if he *was* a moonshiner. Notwithstanding all this, Roy had always thought himself a little better than anyone who made whisky, (and perhaps he was right) and had been of the opinion that he was a little above any moonshiner's child. But tonight he decided differently. He arrived at the conclusion that the drunkard's child was as good as anyone. He know how patiently she had always implored her father to give up his wicked life, and how untiringly she had begged Floyd to be a better boy. And now, that the arrest of her father and brother had come so near killing her, he was confident that in the breast of the little mountain girl throbbed one of the warmest and tenderest of hearts. To-night the great blue eyes with their long, silky lashes seemed to gaze into his inmost soul. The little girl meant something to him—something which he could not understand. The

innocent, pale face was constantly before him, and seemed to be pleading to him to help her father and brother out of trouble. Never before had anyone made such an impression on his mind; so he resolved that from that night hence he would help that little girl. He would help her to accomplish what she set out to do—to live a beautiful life.

He urged the big horse onward, and soon he was winding his tortuous way down Big Creek. The road was rough and the night was dark. But it mattered not for the roughness of the road nor the darkness of the night, that homeless little girl with her big, innocent eyes was ever before him.

He rode up to the gate of Dr. Reece's yard, and after a few loud "helloes" he brought the physician to the door. After being told that he was wanted, the doctor gave a ready assent, and in the course of a few minutes he was ready to start. Three hours of hard riding brought them to Uncle Jack's just as the first streaks of dawn were stealing in from the east.

All night Floyd had suffered untold agony, and morning again found him in a very painful condition—still growing worse. After a prolonged examination of the wound, Dr. Reece took a chair and gravely lighted a cigarette. He shook his head doubtfully and declared that the case was a difficult one.

"Uncle Jack," said he, "there is but one show for the boy, and that is an operation. Blood-poison has set up in a violent way; and, considering the intense heat of the weather, I should say that the wound is very dangerous."

After breakfast he made ready for the operation.

With a little instruction from the doctor, Roy administered the chloroform with as much judgment as a surgeon. The operation was carried through, and Floyd endured it much better than the average man does. The surgeon changed his opinion, and before he left he said that, with proper care, the boy would recover.

From the moment the operation was finished Floyd grew better; but for many a day he was forced to keep his bed or sit with his leg lying on a pillow. Often he talked to Maude Garland and Roy, or listened to the sweet strains of Uncle Jack's violin. He loved it better than any music he had ever heard; and while still unable to stir, he even learned to play himself.

He heard of his father's sentence with sorrow; but he believed that when he should recover, his own would be little less. Flora, who had now almost recovered from that awful shock, said not a word when she heard where they had sent him. She only turned those great, blue, innocent eyes on anyone who chanced to be talking

of the affair, and her pale face would blush with shame. Almost every day she would stroll through the fields, and sometimes to her mother's grave where she would sit for hours together, gazing out over the broad, blue expanse of hills. Those were lonely days for her, although she was given every comfort that Uncle Jack and Aunt Nellie could afford; and Maude's friendship for her knew no bounds. But none of these could quite erase the gloom from her soul. She saw the everlasting ruin her father had brought on himself and the misery he had brought to her. However hospitable those good old people might be to her, it stung her still to know that it was done as a deed of charity. She had a proud, sensitive spirit. She meant to work for the Garlands to pay for her keeping. She and Maude became fast friends; and often the Garland girl would shed tears while listening to the sad stories of the moonshiner's child.

Floyd continued to grow better. When the season of frost had come round again, he had laid aside his crutches. But to him, too, Justice must needs be meted out. One morning when the haze of Indian summer hung over the hills like a veil, the authorities came and took him away. Flora watched him disappear in the smoky distance, but not one tear did she shed. She had now seen her last blood relative go from her to a prison pen. What could be

worse? She no longer imagined death to be a grim monster. She would have welcomed him gladly. But the blackest clouds must vanish, and the darkest shadows must flee away. So it was with the little mountain girl. As the days passed on, she considered her life less seriously and became quite cheerful and sweet-tempered.

CHAPTER V.

AFTER many weary days in jail, Floyd was sentenced to the same Federal prison for a period of three years. He found his father in delicate health. The boy saw at once that he would never serve out his term. Numerous gray hairs could be distinguished about his temples and the top of his head was prematurely bald. He was lean and emaciated and the deep blue eyes had lost some of their brilliance. He had been in the hospital most of the time, and the physicians had already advised his pardon. In a few weeks the pardon was granted by a President who was afterwards assassinated, and the moonshiner bade his convict son an affectionate farewell and turned his face toward his beloved home in the hills.

Mont got off the train at Cedar Bluff and found Gordon Martin's team ready to start back with a wagon load of groceries. He hired the driver to convey him and his meagre baggage to Martin's store.

Gordon was a son of old Josiah, and a right clever merchant he was. He was also post-master. Most of the patrons of his store considered him the most important

person in the neighborhood. His father, old Josiah, was a very pious old fellow in his own estimation, being a stanch Methodist. He conducted a prayer meeting and Sunday School in the schoolhouse. He would give cheerfully and without a murmur to any little local preacher, but for the really poor and needy, he had nothing. He always wore a blue bandanna handkerchief tied over his ears; and his voice was noted throughout the hills for its peculiar nasal twang. Sometimes he was gay and jovial, and sometimes crabbed and harsh; and when he was angry with one he was angry with all. No traveler would he entertain unless he was some particular friend or a Methodist—and all his friends were Methodists and all Methodists were his friends. Gordon, the merchant and post-master, inherited but few of the characteristics of his father; but, like old Josiah, he was a devoted follower of Wesley. He did not inherit the old man's changeable temper. He was never morose or moody; but was always ready for a joke, and never took life very seriously except when the circuit-rider or the Presiding Elder visited him. He was very liberal with his neighbors when he saw a dollar coming to him by his liberality; but when no money was in sight, he could deny anyone of a favor and send him away with such a good-natured joke that he could not be at all offended.

Gordon's store, which was on the road that leads down the Divide, was the resort of the young men who would loiter around all day there and exchange jokes with the good-natured merchant, who would exchange candy and tobacco with them for their dimes and nickels.

The wagon arrived at the store late in the afternoon, and the ex-moonshiner walked in, a perfect stranger. None were expecting him, and so changed was he that Gordon merely nodded to him. After paying for his transportation, he made himself known, and to his surprise, Gordon gave his money back. When he had gone, the generous merchant suffered a severe rebuke in the nasal twang of old Josiah. In tart language the old man informed his son that it was no great honor to him to bring a convict into the community even for pay.

It was late in the month of April. Mont looked about over his old haunts and saw everything unchanged. The bursting buds, the hum of bees, the songs of birds were all tidings of glad spring; but no tidings of gladness came to him. Though proud to get back to his old hills again, no happiness was his.

It was nearly sundown when he started down the Divide to Uncle Jack's, and darkness overtook him at the old log schoolhouse. There the road forked. He stopped and looked down the path which led to his

own cabin. The old graveyard on the Knob was outlined against the gold-illumined sky. How dark and silent the two tall cedars looked! Near those sighing trees were the cheerless graves of his family, and he knew that ere long his own would be added to the number. He pushed on and reached Uncle Jack's as the family were at supper. Notwithstanding his sad change, Flora at once knew her father; and, throwing her arms around him, she wept with mingled joy and grief.

Mont needed not to have explained why he had been pardoned, anyone could read the explanation in his hollow cheeks and hear it in his violent cough. After relating something of his short term in prison, he dropped into a peaceful sleep, and not until morning dawned did he wake.

CHAPTER VI.

THE summer passed away with few events. Morgan Lambert and his tall son Jake never once showed themselves about Uncle Jack's. They were always together, and sometimes they would spend a day at Gordon Martin's store. Old Josiah had great faith in Morgan's religion, and was continually warning him to be careful that he did not fall from Grace. Morgan and Jake never failed to appear at the prayer meetings; and the elder Lambert was becoming a studious reader of the Bible. In his prayers he always asked the Lord to make bright the declining days of dear old Josiah, and that he might lead his class to Endless Bliss. Roy Garland would listen to the stories of Morgan's devout Christian life with sarcasm. He could never place any confidence in him. He boldly declared that he was a sneaking hypocrite.

As the summer advanced Mont Winston grew weaker. While the cool September nights were changing the leaves to a yellow hue, the White Plague was working the same change in the complexion of the ex-moonshiner. He was forced to take his bed;

and often, for hours, he would lie as still as a statue, listening to Flora read the Scripture. He would often have Uncle Jack sit by the bed and play the old-time hymns his wife had loved; and as he listened to the music a smile of satisfaction would play about his thin lips. Sometimes, while all was quiet, he would sing a whole stanza of his favorite hymn:

"Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me;
I once was lost, but now I'm found,
Was blind, but now I see."

He never tired of talking of Christ and the mission of mercy on which He had been sent to earth; and often as he talked, his voice would grow strong and his countenance would light up with a glorious brightness. Autumn passed dreamily on; and, little by little, the sick man withered away. The leaves turned golden and red and fluttered down to their earthly beds. The chilly winds that foretell the wintry blast began to scatter them about; and Thanksgiving came round again. On the very day observed for prayer and thanks Mont Winston closed his weary lids and fell asleep. On the second day after his death his body was laid to rest on the Knob.

At the burial Flora shed no tears. Though sad, she could not cry. She had long expected the death of her father, and the end was no shock. It is true that when she witnessed

the faint struggle with death, she shed tears; but for the last view of him, she had prepared herself. She fully believed that his sins had been forgiven; and for his future her hope was bright. The one great object of her life now was to save Floyd. She feared that three years of prison life would make a Jean Valjean of him. But she longed for his return. She would act the part of the Bishop and her unfortunate convict brother would yet be saved.

CHAPTER VII.

MONT Winston owned several tracts of wild land. Before his death he had made his will, conveying all his possessions to his two children, except a large tract which he deeded to Uncle Jack in consideration of the aid and assistance rendered his family in their misfortunes. Uncle Jack was made administrator and guardian for the Winston heirs. He had promised the dying man that Flora should be sent to school. Mont had made provisions that one-fourth of his estate be sold and the proceeds be used as an educational fund for the little girl, should it become neccessary to send her away to school.

A free school was going on in the little log house at the forks of the road; and now, that Mont's death had given her nothing to do, Flora became a regular pupil. She had already attended there two terms, and had made more progress than any other child who had ever come there to study. On account of her shabby clothes and meagre lunch, she had always provoked much ridicule among the other children, who would not play with her because she was the drunkard's child. In her former school

days there, the poor little bashful girl would take her lunch basket and go up to the Old Signal tree and sit at its roots through the entire recess, brooding over her little sad life and listening to the gleeful shouts of the school children, among whom she could find but two friends. But now they did not laugh at her clothes. Maude Garland could sew nicely, so Flora dressed like the average girl. All now except the Martin children spoke kindly to the orphan. The Martins would have scolded their children, if they had in any way befriended the moonshiner's daughter.

The school was couducted by Mrs. Mada Stover, the well-educated and accomplished wife of a neighboring farmer. She had been reared an orphan herself; and by her welcome smile and kind words, Flora knew that she had found a friend.

When the school closed Flora had advanced in her studies far beyond the expectation of her teacher. Many of the larger girls and boys had become discouraged, and had declared their determination to quit school for good. Many were jealous of her advancement, but none laughed at her now. Anybody could see that an unusually strong brain lay behind those big, pleading, innocent blue eyes.

Summer came with many roses and other fragrant flowers. Beautiful rhododendrons put forth their gorgeous colors, and Aunt

Nellie's morning-glories bloomed afresh each night. After finishing her morning's task, Flora would take her book and stroll through the grassy fields to a great locust tree where, for hours, she would sit and read and dream and gaze down on the silent hills. But as the innocent, almost happy child contemplated the beauties of these hills—her hills—she never once thought of the fact that great stores of wealth for her lay within their rugged bosoms.

Roy and Maude, though more studious than the average boy or girl, could never find the pleasure in their books that Flora could. Often while the Garland children were in the land of Nod the little orphan would sit up by an oil lamp and pore over her history or grammar.

All summer she did Aunt Nellie's simple tasks and diligently continued her studies. When school opened again Mrs. Stover declared that the improvement she had made since the close of the last term surpassed anything she had ever experienced in all her school work.

CHAPTER VIII.

ANOTHER summer Flora spent quietly at Uncle Jack's. She ravenously devoured every book that came in her way; and she enjoyed them all. Uncle Jack intended sending her and Roy and Maude to High School when the next term should open. The little orphan was anxious to go and learn more; but somehow, as the time for her to start approached, she loved the old hills more and more. The children who attended the High School were proud, haughty things, she thought, and they would treat her as the mountain children had when she was the moonshiner's child. She knew that they would find out that she had no home; and they would call her the hired girl and say all manner of mean things about her, and she would get homesick and cry to come back. She was a mountain girl, and the town girls would not care to make her their companion.

Each morning she would take her book and trip up the Divide road through the dripping woods and mingle her songs with those of the birds. She thought she ought to stay. The birds, the old trees, and the hills, which were the first sights her baby

eyes had ever seen, all beckoned her to stay. She would very often go to the old graveyard and sit and listen to the cedars whispering their soothing lullabies over the graves of her loved ones. With sadness she would look back at the night her father and brother were arrested. With horror she could see the dark forms groping their way down the steep path to the still. Then the awful words: "Halt, hold; you are our prisoners!" would grate on her ears. The awful run to Uncle Jack's, the terrible suffering that followed, the sad parting with Floyd when he was taken away to prison, and her father's death all rolled up in her memory like a nightmare. Her brother was a convict in a far away Southern city, and she knew that he was unhappy. Would it be just right for her to go to school and learn and be jolly with the other children who had never known trouble when her only brother was toiling under the burning sun or in the cruel walls of a cruel prison? Occasionally she had a letter from him, and he said it was a hard life. No one ever gave him a smile. No friendship was there—none. In the evening she would listen to the wood-thrushes singing down in the darkening coves and wonder if Floyd would not like to hear them too, for she had heard that there were no wood-thrushes in the far off South.

Time had brought health to the little girl

and a rosy hue to her cheeks. The eyes seemed to have lost some of their size, but none of their light and brilliance and pleading. She had grown much in stature and more in beauty. She was a blonde. Her eyes had stolen the color of the violet; and they, unlike the average rogue, could look straight into the eyes of others.

Sometimes she would decide to go, and within an hour she would change her mind. But, at last she finally *made up* her mind. She would go, and more than that, she would study hard. She meant to waste no time. She would be so busy with her books that the proud town children should not see enough of her to make fun of her. She would study while they slept and study while they played, and she would not associate with any of them. She would study so hard that she would soon overtake them and get ahead of them; and by that time she would know how to act in society. That was the right idea.

At last the time for them to go came. Their clothes were packed in a big trunk, and all kissed Aunt Nellie good-by. Gordon Martin's driver, who was then idle, was employed to take them to Richlands where the school was located, and bring the wagon and team back. Uncle Jack had obtained board for them in the home of Dr. Reece; and to the Doctor's the driver was instructed to take them.

It was a fresh September morning. Roy and Maude were in the highest of spirits. Flora, too, appeared to be joyful, but deep down in her soul was a vague, sad feeling which she meant to keep secret. She wanted to go, and meant to go; and yet she wanted to stay. Her hills were silently beckoning her to stay; and as she went farther and farther, she could hear them calling, calling. She was leaving her hills—the only home she had ever known, the only part of the world she had ever seen. She must stay a long time before she could see them again—before she could see Aunt Nellie and Uncle Jack again. She knew she would be homesick, but she resolved to bear it and persevere.

The morning was damp but bright. The trees were dripping with dew. An ocean of mist lay over the limitless hills, with an occasional peak piercing the fog like an island of the sea. Soft, feathery clouds floated up the coves to the ridge and vanished in the yellow sunlight. Squirrels barked incessantly and bob-whites whistled merrily from every field. The forest was yet in full foliage, and for yards and yards the wagon rolled under a solid roof of luxuriant branches.

At noon the wagon stopped and all fell to their lunch. Before them and below them spread basin-like the broad valley of the Clinch. The fields, with their broad

acres of ripening corn, were to the mountain children the greatest wonders of their lives. They had never dreamed that so many smooth farms lay so near to their hills. The wagon slowly descended the long mountain road and lumbered up the broad, white turnpike and over the wagon bridge into the little town. Everything was wonder to Flora. The tall wind mills, the brick sidewalks, the tall, black reservoir on the hill, the telegraph wires were all pure wonder; but she showed no surprise. She looked amazed when an engine passed, but she knew what it was and said nothing.

Mrs. Reece received the children with a smile and at once showed them their rooms. The house itself was as much a wonder to the orphan as the wind mills, the sidewalks and the telegraph wires had been. The broad porch, with its massive columns, was in her imagination like some Grecian temple. The white walls, the rich furniture, the padded chairs and the soft carpets reminded her of Le Bocage which she had read about in a novel. When she went to the supper table she thought the dining room as wonderful as anything she had seen. The long table, with its snow-white linen, and the napkin by each plate were strange things to her. She had never seen so much beautiful china in all her life. The electric lamps hanging from the ceiling, the flowered wall-paper, and the strange, daintily-prepared

food were great curiosities. She could see nothing but wonders. She hardly dared to eat anything for the fear of making a mistake.

That night she slept none. Engines were constantly shifting about the station, and people walked back and forth on the brick sidewalk beneath her window. To these noises her ears were unaccustomed. She was already homesick. She wished she could go back.

In the morning the little shy girl, with her two mountain friends, went down to the great schoolhouse. She had never seen such a large schoolhouse before. It was built of brick; and she wondered if it hadn't taken a long time to build it. And the children! She had never seen so many together before. When the bell called them in, she was still more surprised. The schoolhouse had more than one room. That was strange. And the furniture! She had never seen the like. The rows of patented desks, the globes, the charts, the maps and the pictures on the walls were all very wonderful. She had never known before that such things were to be found in schoolrooms.

But now it was the teacher's time to be surprised. The precision and quickness with which the little girl answered her examining questions were astonishing. And the first week of school brought results that

were still more astonishing. How could that little mountain girl, who had never been five miles away from home in her life, be possessed with so much knowledge? Flora became the envy of her class-mates; and many, who had never been known to study hard, put forth every effort to keep up with the moonshiner's daughter.

CHAPTER IX.

WILD mountain land had for years been attracting the greedy eyes of capital. Vast acres of the Divide were ownd by men who had never set foot on mountain soil. Over some of these tracts Gordon Martin watched with jealous care. The owner of one of these big surveys was a prominent attorney of Tazewell, who, through his agent, was continually buying more and more of the mountain holdings. Gordon thought this land king the greatest man on earth, and showed his admiration by giving to his youngest son his name. From that time hence the merchant exercised almost unlimited power. He was made the acting agent for the attorney, and he began taking up options. He told the neighbors that their land was worthless, that there was no coal, and that while the boom was on was the time to sell. "If you let this opportunity slip," he would say, "you will never have another; for it won't take them long to find out there's nothing here. Gentlemen, if you let this pass, you'll never hear an engine whistle in these hills."

The mountaineers listened to Gordon's prophetic words. He ought to know. They

gave him options on their lands, and they went. Many of those who had sold out went away; but most of them came back and rented from Gordon their old homes in the hills. In no other place could they find such satisfaction. At night they would dream of the hills and all day they would think of them and away from them they could not stay. So they came back and found their former possessions worth three times as much as what they had sold them for. But Uncle Jack would listen to none of Gordon's fairy tales. He told him simply that he did not want to sell. All the land was taken up around Uncle Jack and the Winston heirs, but still he would not sell.

A force of men now came dressed in khaki, with transit and tape. Gordon's home was changed into a little hotel. He employed a clerk for his store; and everywhere the hum of industry was heard. Morgan and Jake Lambert were employed by the surveyors as bush-cutters, and they carried three dollars' worth of Gordon's groceries to their cabin each night. Engineers were already running out the location for the road up Dry Fork. Active, prosperous times were coming to the hills.

School was out. Flora had fallen but a few points below the grades required to finish the High School. Her progress was incomparable. In the whole history of the

school nothing had been found to equal it.

The children were proud to come back home. They had longed to see Uncle Jack and Aunt Nellie and the big black horses. They had wanted to hear the bob-whites whistle again. They were afraid to whistle near the town, for hunters were always banging at them with their old guns. It was spring, and everything looked so fresh and green, that these healthy mountain children, like the uncaged bird, felt in their souls the sweet freedom of the hills.

Flora was looking for Floyd back home, and now her future was brightening.

CHAPTER X.

AUTUMN again in the hills. Leaves already stained by the first slight frost, early harbinger of winter. The buckeye, like a skeleton, leafless and grim. Wild grapes hanging in rich clusters from every vine, and poke berries withering in the fence corners. Chestnut burs opening and letting loose their rich contents. Pumpkins glowing like living coals in every field of corn.

Since early dawn a lone figure had been toiling on toward the hills. He had stopped at Richlands to see his sister and his friend, Roy Garland; for they were at school again, and now, with a heart beating with gladness, he labored on. Four years had wrought few changes in the old hills. The same old log schoolhouse stood at the forks of the road; and on the bleached logs he could still see the names carved there by him long ago. He looked to the eastward, and the same West Virginia hills spread out before him. Over them hung the same blue mist—the same mellow haze. He had been out of prison nearly a year, but had got a job and had worked in the same Southern state ever since that time. He

had regained his health lost in the walls of the prison, and was now a sun-tanned, healthy young man. He sat down on the rough stone before the old schoolhouse door and wiped the perspiration from his forehead. A flood of thoughts swelled up within him and made him happy. Everything was unchanged. The same old trees were there, the same mountains, the same air of peace and comfort that he had felt long, long ago. He rose and went to Uncle Jack's and Aunt Nellie held him by the hand and looked long and steadily into his eyes.

"And he's already growed to be a man," she said, "and the penitentiary ain't dealt with him like it did his Daddy. Pore Mont, Floyd, he died a-prayin'. He jest talked about Christ all the time he was sick. I'm satisfied your Daddy is at rest."

The boy said nothing, but turned and walked to the porch railing. A great lump came up in his throat and he shut his eyes to keep back the tears. He looked out over the darkening landscape and listened to a dog barking far away. One dim star was shining above the horizon. Lights from numerous mountain cabins shone through the dusk. He was lonely. His sister was at school, and his father was sleeping over on the Knob. The tears came up in spite of him and dropped down on his sleeve. Then he felt relieved and went back into the house.

After supper had been eaten a loud "hello" called Uncle Jack to the door. Someone was down at the gate and wanted the old man to come down. It was one of the khaki-clad surveyors who wanted to get board with the old man. He said that he had a great deal of calculation on hand, and that it could not be done at Gordon Martin's, because they were so crowded. He just wanted board and a quiet room with the old man where he could work in peace. He introduced himself as Bernard Forest, the chief engineer. When the young engineer shook hands with Floyd his countenance fell. Somewhere he had seen him before. Floyd knew that he had seen *him,* too; but he could not tell where. The two young men exchanged numerous glances; and as often, the eyes of the foreigner fell before the piercing stare of the other.

The engineer opened his grip and took out a cigar. He passed the box, and Floyd accepted one. As Forest lighted his cigar, the tiny flame of the match illumined his face, and Floyd was *sure* he had seen him before. The mountaineer told the stranger his life's history, and never left out a syllable of his career as a moonshiner. He told how he and his father had been arrested, how he had been shot, and of the terrible suffering and the painful operation that followed. He painted before the eyes of the engineer his hard life in the Federal prison

and the lonely, sad days that followed the news of his father's death. With glaring eyes he recounted the cowardly act of a drunken officer. The engineer's cigar went out in his hand. When he relighted it, his face was very pale and his hand trembled.

Suddenly changing the line of conversation, he said:

"Mr. Garland, what is the least you can board me for?"

"Oh, we won't fall out about the board," said the old man. "It'll be reasonable."

"But I'd rather know just exactly what I'm paying."

"Is twenty-five cents a day too much?" asked the old man.

Of course twenty-five cents a day was not too much. The engineer agreed to Uncle Jack's terms and became an occupant of his home.

Floyd occupied the bed with the engineer that night. The weary, foot-sore young mountaineer at once fell asleep, but his companion lay awake. His mind was overburdened with thought. He was thinking of something he dared not express—of another night he had spent in the hills.

CHAPTER XI.

AUTUMN passed away and Christmas came. Before Floyd had been sent away to prison he had always celebrated Christmas by getting on a big "spree." But this time he drank no whiskey. He saw others drink it, and felt ashamed. He would blush when he thought of the trouble and hardships brought on his mother by whiskey. Oh, yes, it had been the indirect cause of her death. He had quit. He meant never to taste it again. His old friends offered it to him, but he refused. He had quit—he had quit for good.

The surveyors were still at work on the Divide. Bernard Forest had been a constant boarder at Uncle Jack's since Floyd's return. The two young men were together a great part of the time; but, somehow, no great friendship existed betwen them. Floyd was trying to recall the time when he had first seen him, for he was sure that sometime and somewhere he had seen him. But, try as he might, he could never think when or where it was. The engineer, when talking, would turn his face away from the mountaineer. He could not endure his penetrating eyes. Floyd could feel, somehow, a

little hatred for him. He could not tell why, but he did not like him, and the dislike was growing. The mountain boy could see that the engineer had no great love for *him;* so a silent hatred sprang up between the two. Each knew that he was hated by the other, but neither knew the cause.

Spring brought to the hills gentle breezes, sweet flowers, and music from countless feathered songsters. And it brought something else. Another term of school had closed, and the Garland boy and girl and Flora Winston had come home again. All had finished the four years' course in two. The proud town children laughed at the mountain children no more. Many wished they had been born mountaineers, and all envied the healthy, robust bodies of their schoolmates from the hills.

Roy was now a heavy, well-built young man, and Maude had grown into a beautiful woman. She was neither blonde nor brunette. Her blue eyes and fair complexion were common to the former type and her dark hair to the latter. She was beautiful — almost as beautiful as Flora. There was a wide difference between the appearance of the two girls, but no fairer specimens of the mountain belle could have been found anywhere.

Roy still remembered the night he went for Dr. Reece—that night long ago when Floyd was shot. He also remembered the

promise he had made to himself, and he was keeping it. He was helping the moonshiner's daughter—or was trying to help her—and she was helping *him*. Her perseverance was helping him and would always help him. It would enable him to fight the battles of life with more ambition —with more hopes of winning. She had risen, in his estimation, from the moonshiner's little starving, naked girl to an angel—to the most beautiful creature he had ever seen. As school was now out, he would tell her so some day. He did not know, but he believed that he was in love with her. He admired her courage and "grit." She was his ideal for a woman or girl—she had the nerve.

And now, that the time for planting had come, the two young mountaineers rolled up their sleeves. One had spent his earlier days following a vicious trade, and now he meant to atone. The other had been in school, and he intended to harden his hands and muscles. He would show his friends that he was not above honest toil. From morning until night the two worked in their fields, and they looked on their growing corn with as much pride as the artist does on some glorious painting he is just finishing.

The two girls would let Aunt Nellie work no more. While they were busy with her little tasks, the good old mother would tell

them they were the best girls in all the world, and calmly smoke her pipe.

The engineer now had another enemy at Uncle Jack's. Roy did not like the way he put on airs, and he told him so. He did not like *him,* either, and he meant to tell him that sometime. But Flora was friendly to him—she could be no other way. She was friendly to everybody. The engineer cared not how many enemies he made if he could make *her* his friend. Her brother would scold her severely for having anything to say to him; but she would always tell him that Forest was a nice man, and that he was intelligent. She could not see him as a scoundrel like her brother and Roy said he was, but persisted that he was a nice, intelligent young man.

Roy would watch him smile at Flora, and listen to his soft, gentle words addressed to her, and tremble with rage. Secretly he longed to reach out his strong arm and take him by the throat. He was in love with the moonshiner's daughter, and he was jealous. He had had something he wanted to tell her for a long time, and now he was going to tell her.

CHAPTER XII.

ONE morning in the latter part of the summer the three schoolmates and the ex-convict lad strolled up to the Old Signal. That was the highest point in the county, for the Geologists had said so. They had recorded the altitude on a leaden plate and had embedded it in a sandstone on the summit of the knob. And, more than that, they had cleared the timber away, and had left nothing but the Old Signal tree, a venerable chestnut which stood on the side of the peak. Roy and Flora found a seat in the soft crab grass which covered the knob, and Floyd and Maude sought the shade of the old tree. A cool mountain breeze stirred, and the sunshine was not oppressive. Flora talked of the beauties of the hils, and pointed out to the boy many a distant view. She called his attention to the songs of the birds, but he had heard them not. His ears were open to no other sound but the girl's voice, and he could see nothing but her pleasant face. Sometimes a squirrel would dart up a near-by tree, or a martin would skim over their heads, causing the girl to utter little exclamations of surprise. The boy sat dreaming by her side.

"What are you quarreling about, Roy?" she finally asked in a mischievous tone.

The boy jumped.

"I was thinking," he said.

"Thinking of what?" asked Flora, the mischief in her voice increasing.

"You—you—wouldn't believe it if I should tell you," stammered the lad, and a lump came up in his throat and interfered with his speech.

"Oh, yes," persisted the girl, "I'll believe you. Ain't I—haven't I always believed you?"

Again he stammered: "I was think—I was thinking—" But the lump choked him so that he had to stop.

He pulled a handful of the grass growing by his side and put a blade in his mouth. The girl looked astonished, but said nothing. He dug his heel into the hard clay and went on:

"I—I was thinking—I was thinking—how happy—I could be— if you—loved me."

The lump had left this throat now, and he looked straight into her liquid blue eyes. The girl was silent for a moment and then said:

"I do love you, Roy—I love you and Uncle Jack and Aunt Nellie and Maud. I love all of you."

"You mean that you like us," said the boy; and he felt the lump coming back to his throat.

"I mean that I consider all your family my friends; therefore, I love them."

"But I meant somethin' else."

A cloud came over the sun, and Flora watched the shadows moving over the distant hills. She said nothing and Roy went on:

"I meant I would be happy if you loved me well enough to be my wife."

The lump was now all gone. He had said what he had wanted to say.

The girl looked around vacantly for a moment, then said:

"You're joking, aren't you, Roy?"

"I never was any more in earnest in my life," returned the boy. The foolish, perplexed smile had now left his face, and he spoke in a serious tone.

"Roy, you surprise me," said the girl. But she was no longer puzzled. He had at last spoken plainly, and she would speak plainly, too: "You seem like my brother, Roy; and I never dreamed of your saying things like this. Long ago, when I was a little ragged girl, I called you my sweetheart. You were the only boy who would give me a kind word; but you did it because you were sorry for me. It would have offended you, perhaps, if anyone had joked you about me. I was a drunkard's child, but I couldn't help that. I was the same person then that I am now. I am no better now than I was then; and I fear that I am

not near so good. Your father took care of me, and all pitied me, the poor little orphan. I went to school and learned a little, and Daddy's land that he left for us is now valuable. We are no richer, though, than we were then. We have not added one acre to it. It has simply increased in value. It was then considered worthless and I was a pauper. But now our land would bring money —would bring lots of money. There has been a great change, and yet there has been no change; for I am the very same girl, only a little bigger, and I own the same that I did when I was a pauper.

"I know you are as good as anyone, and I always thought you were a little better. But you must give me time to think. You have been too sudden. You have puzzled me."

Although she had spoken plainly, her words left Roy in doubt and much perplexed. He wished she had told him just what she meant to do. He believed she could have told him whether she would ever be his wife, and he thought she should have done that. When she spoke again, he smiled a dissatisfied smile; and the girl saw that he was not at ease, and asked him to go back home with her. Mischievously pretending to be unable to rise, she gave him her hand; and he helped her to her feet. For a time he looked into her smiling eyes, then, throwing his brawny arms around her,

he blushingly kissed her. The girl called Maude, and in a moment she and Floyd appeared on the summit of the knob. The two boys helped the two girls down the stony path; and when they looked into each other's faces, each read a tale of disappointment there.

The shadows were lengthening when they returned home, and the fall crickets and katydids were singing their melancholy songs. The eyes of the boys did not puzzle Aunt Nellie. She secretly solved their riddle. She asked no questions, but she knew it all.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE first days of September were at hand, and Bernard Forest was going away. He was not going to stay, but was called to report to his employer. The two mountain boys were glad to see him start. Their only regret about it was that he was coming back again. But both saw that Flora was not glad. After he had gone she took a novel and went to the shade of the old locust tree; but she did not read. The book lay unopened in her lap. With dreaming eyes, she gazed out over the mist-veiled hills. She was sad and painfully perplexed. She could see a broad-shouldered youth always before her, who had seemed as near to her as Floyd; but, somehow, her relation to him had now changed. He had on his face that crimson blush—that foolish smile. She could feel his strong arms closing round her, and the pressure of his lips upon her own. Then she could see the little engineer, too. He was gone, and that was why she was sad. She could still hear his soft, tender words; and she remembered how easily they had fallen from his lips a few days before, when he took her in his

arms and said: "I love you." Oh, it was no trouble for him to say that. She wondered why it had been such a task for Roy merely to hint at the expression of love. She remembered how he had stammered and blushed and how she had helped him out with what he wanted to say. She knew that those had been painful moments for him, and pitied him. She had known him all her life. She knew there was no better boy, and she believed she loved him. She believed she loved the engineer, too; so she was perplexed.

All day she was silent except when she hummed a fragment of some old love song. Aunt Nellie knew why she was sad, but she asked her no questions. Roy, too, knew the cause of her sadness; and this knowledge made *him* sad. In the evening he sought solace in a squirrel hunt.

With a full cartridge belt and a gun, the sad-hearted lad started up the Divide road. A storm was raging in his soul. He wished he had never seen that little orphan girl. He had fallen in love with her, and he was angry with himself for having allowed it. He had told her that he loved her, and she had as good as told him that she did *not* love him. His family had never been disgraced by the whiskey traffic. He was respectable, and he didn't see how he could have fallen in love with her. He could have kept it to himself, he thought; and he didn't

see why he had not done that. But he had been in love with her. He would not deny that.

When he came to the schoolhouse, he turned down the path that led to Mont Winston's cabin. As he passed the Old Signal, he could still see the impression in the grass where he and Flora had sat when he told her of his love. The place looked hateful, and he turned his head.

On down the ridge he went, occasionally casting his eyes down on the lower hills. But, somehow, they had lost their beauty. They looked lonely and lifeless and forbidding. Was that little orphan girl the only charm those old hills contained? He thought so.

He went on dreaming and thinking, and many a squirrel leaped across his path unseen by him. Unconsciously he passed Morgan Lambert's cabin and turned abruptly down one of the intersecting spurs. Through a dense growth of laurel and huckleberry shrubs he went, and soon reached the end of the spur. He sat down on a mossy log and listened for squirrels. No sounds disturbed the stillness of the woods save the dropping of acorns from the trees. Down in the cove to his right he noticed a thin spiral of blue smoke rising lazily upward through the timber. Cautiously he crept around the hill and stopped behind a large tulip tree. He could now see

the source of the smoke. It was a moonshine still. For five minutes he stood there behind the tree without seeing any living thing about the place; then Morgan Lambert came through the low door and wiped the perspiration from his face with a red bandanna. Then Jake came out, sat down on a large boulder and began to fan himself with his "sundown." The plant was in full force, and Morgan and Jake were the operators. His former opinions of Morgan were now confirmed: As he had always said, Lambert was a sneaking hypocrite.

When the moonshiners had gone back into the house, Roy slipped from behind the tree and retraced his steps up the spur. Late in the evening he reached home, but said nothing about what he had learned. Flora was friendly to him, but he had no conversation for her. She saw that he was deeply wounded, and was very sorry of it. The girl was in a painful situation. She slept none that night.

CHAPTER XIX.

AUTUMN had passed away again and Bernard Forest had come back to the hills—back to Uncle Jack's. The Christmas festivals were over and Floyd Winston was making preparations to go away to school. It was to a business college in the Hill City that he was going. With gladness the engineer watched him get ready to start. He told the boy that he was making the wisest step of his life. He wondered why Roy didn't go away and take a business course, too. But the mountain boy told him that he had work to do at home. The engineer said that he would love to see the mountaineer try to rise to a level with other mankind.

When Floyd had gone Roy became lonely. He could see a very rare class of manhood in the ex-convict lad. He felt alone while his friend was away. Floyd was disgraced;—he knew that—but he knew that he could outlive the prison stain, and he fully believed he would do it. He had already begun in an admirable way to outlive it. He had begun in the best way possible to make up for his wasted boyhood. Roy knew him as no other did, and he knew that he did not

belong to the common class of mountaineers. He had been, but was not now a moonshiner. He had been, but was not now a convict. Though bearing the brand of shame, he was a rising gentleman with an honest heart, a strong mind, and unflinching courage and strong, strong hands that were not afraid of honest toil.

Maude Garland, too, was lonely while the mountain boy was away. She, like her brother, admired his pluck. She knew that he had had a bad chance in life, and had been reared in the shadow of a dark trade. But his mother, she remembered her. Surely the lad had received a lasting good from her advice, although her tears and prayers had been ignored by him. She was confident—she knew—that he would atone for his useless youth—his vicious boyhood. His disgrace had been due to his own father's misguidance. His own father had been to blame for all the boy's shame—for all of his misfortunes. Yes, Mont had brought it all about. He had gone to his grave with a bad name. Oh, yes, he had brought an early death to himself and had left to the little girl a cruel shame for her inheritance. To Maude the boy was blameless. He had been led into that vicious trade before he was old enough to see the ruinous reward for him. He had told her once that he loved her, but she had not been prepared for that. She had refused his love. But since that time—the day they

went to the Old Signal—she had felt a strange something about her which she could not understand. She knew that the boy was making a great reformation. She often thought of his prison life with pity; and it made her angry to hear neighbors speaking slanderously of him. A strange affection for him had in spite of her started, and she felt it growing. It had grown so much she felt miserable and alone during his absence.

Floyd had been gone a month, and had not yet written her a line. He had written to Roy, but had not once mentioned her name. After she had read her brother's letter, she stole out and cried. She could not tell why, but it hurt her feelings to know that he had inquired about all but her. He had asked about Uncle Jack and Aunt Nellie, and had even said something about the engineer. He had asked about everything, it seemed, except herself.

Immediately after supper she went to her room—the room occupied by her and Flora—and started a fire. She lighted a lamp and sat down by the window. A deep snow covered the earth, and a full moon had risen. The night was cold, but her face was burning. She raised the window and leaned over the sill. She could hear the sheep bleating down at the barn. Morgan Lambert's hounds were yedping over on the Knob. How different was that night from all oth-

ers that had passed. The wind was tangling her hair, and she drew her head back inside. She moved her chair close up to the fire and held her hands over the blaze. To-night Floyd was away—far away—and she wondered if he ever thought of her. She wished he were there by her side telling her the same story he had told her at the roots of the Old Signal tree. She now understood the strange feeling for the mountain boy. It could be nothing else but love.

When Flora came up Maude told her all, for she never refused to divulge any secret to the moonshiner's girl. But she could not sleep that night. That strange thing, which had for a long time puzzled her, had put her terribly out of order. She firmly declared to her friend that love was the most tormenting of all diseases.

Roy answered Floyd's letter and the Winston boy wrote again. This time he sent his kindest regards to Maude. The girl was delighted. He might yet forgive her and tell her again that he loved her. She knew that she loved him now; and if he were only at home, she thought, he would tell her that old story again. It would be a year before he could get his diploma, and probably he would not come until it should be granted. She longed to see him again, and that was a long time to wait. She suffered a great deal of anxiety; for there were lots of girls in the city and they

had never heard of his early career and his prison life. Perhaps he would fall in love with some of them. She remembered how handsome, how strong and healthy he looked when he left; and she feared that some city girl would fall in love with him. More than once she was tempted to write him and boldly ask him to forgive her, and once she startd to write a letter; but the belief that he would write her caused her to burn the sheet unfinished.

At last the letter came. In it he did not mention love, but it was so full of sadness that the girl cried again. The very lines looked lonely. That was because she knew their author to be lonely. She crimped the envelope to put the letter back, and a tiny piece of paper fell to the floor. She picked it up. On one side was a very small picture of the mountain boy. It was Floyd's photo. It looked very life-like, but worn and sad. Again and again she pressed the fragile bit to her lips, and then looked at the sad face again. On it she thought she could see the old prison pallor; but, to her, that was no longer a brand of shame.

That evening she wrote Floyd a letter. In it she begged him to accept her love which she had once refused him. Then after she had mailed the letter she was ashamed. She was afraid that she had done wrong. He might think her too hasty. It might cause him to change his mind.

She thought herself to be the most foolish girl living, and cried every day until she received an answer. When the mail carrier delivered the letter into her hand, she was almost afraid to break the envelope. But, at last, she tore off the end and looked inside. She would read it at all hazards. The salutation was enough "My own Maude," it read. He had forgiven her—had fully forgiven her. He expressed the complete happiness which her letter had brought him, and said that satisfaction undreamed of was now his. The love, which had been giving the girl so much misery during his absence began at once to brighten her life. She was happy—truly happy. The love she had for the mountain boy was unsought. She had tried to smother it down but that had been useless. She was now sure that it was permanent.

Winter passed away. The gentle spring breezes tapped lightly on Nature's myriad doors, and her children responded and came forth. The sun-god, by his cheering magic brought them out. In gay attire and with musical voices, they populated the silent hills. Notwithstanding the beauty and loveliness of the season, it passed away too slowly for Maude. She longed to see winter again. The next season of snow would bring Floyd to her again.

CHAPTER XV.

UNTIL he received Maude's letter, Floyd had been very unhappy. But he had determined to stay until he completed his course. He had wanted to ask something about the girl in his first letter; but, somehow, he could not. He did not know why, but it was simply impossible. The school was as unhappy for him as the prison had been. When he was in prison he had not left his heart in the hills—he was not in love. His sister was at Uncle Jack's but he knew she was being treated nicely. He had suffered no anxiety on her account. But the first few weeks of his school life had been almost unbearable. He loved the Garland girl, but did not know that she loved him. He did not know that the girl's painful love was equal to his own. But when he read the letter everything changed. He could stay now. Though longing to come back, he knew it would be less painful for him to stay. He was now confident that Maude loved him. That was enough. He could stay anywhere now. With that thought, he laughed at hard lessons. There were none too hard for him now.

Floyd rapidly advanced in all his studies.

He was becoming a good stenographer. His penmanship was far superior to that of any of the other students. Before he had been there a year, his diploma was granted. The president of the college offered to get him a position, but he refused. He told him that a boom was on at home, and that he was needed there. So he came back—back to the hills, and to Maude.

Aunt Nellie watched them meet—her girl and the moonshiner's boy—and judged rightly of Maude's strange demeanor while he had been gone.

The engineer was still in the hills—still at Uncle Jack's, and the hatred between him and Roy was increasing. Each was jealous of the other. Their jealousy was deep—very deep—but silent. The mountaineer longed more than ever to take the engineer by the throat, and the engineer took more pains than ever to show the mountaineer the mistake he was making by staying in the hills. Flora was friendly to both, and was still puzzled. She still thought she loved them both. When Roy would go away from home for a few days, she could not be content. The broad shoulders and the handsome, manly face were always before her. She was almost sure that she loved him.

And when the engineer was away, she could see him, too. There was a wide contrast between the two. How different was the little engineer with his thin, spare body

and delicate legs, clad in khaki and canvas. She could always see the two side by side. Surely the big, handsome mountain boy was superior in every way to the little proud engineer. Then she would, in fancy, hear them talk of love. Roy would look foolish and stammer and turn his face away, and say nothing after all; while the engineer could look boldly in her eyes and tell her the whole story, and never pause an instant for words. Surely, she thought, he must love her more than Roy did.

Roy had again spoken to her of love, with a greater effort and in a more awkward way than before. But this time he was better satisfied with the result. She told him that she believed she loved him. That was better. He might yet succeed.

Floyd was offered several good positions, but he refused them all. He and Roy rolled up their sleeves and went to work. Each day they toiled in the fields, and each night they came in tired and weary. The engineer lost all faith in the boys. He said that the mountaineer could never and would never make anything of himself. A sad condition was theirs, he said. Bitter toil and ignorance was their inheritance from their savage forefathers. But the boys still kept silent and their hatred for him grew.

About the middle of the summer Flora came to the conclusion as to whom she loved. She decided that she loved the en-

gineer. But still her feelings for Roy were not the same as they used to be. But she did not think now that she ever loved him. The idea, she thought, had been a whim, a foolish fancy. She had not told him she did not love him. She would keep that secret, and he would find it out for himself. She knew that he loved her, and she dreaded to see him crushed so suddenly. Little by little he would find it out, and that would not be so bad.

But Roy soon became convinced. One morning when the engineer had started to his work, the mountain boy saw him kiss her at the gate. The sight of that kiss froze his blood. He thought he was going to fall and clutched at his heart. Never before had he had such a strong desire to kill. He felt that he could kill everybody. As he went to his work, he met Flora coming up from the gate. As they met, both turned their heads away. The boy went to the field angry, jealous and ashamed, and the girl took her book to the old locust tree and sat all the forenoon looking down on her hills which seemed suddenly to have lost their charm.

CHAPTER XVI.

TIMES were still lively in the hills. The railroad on Dry Fork was nearing completion, and branch lines were being built up the numerous creeks. Prospectors' camps went up; lumbermen's camps went up, and tramroads were built in a great hurry. The khaki-clad force was increased. The surveying crew was reinforced, and the timber branders came. Many "darkies" and Italians were at work on the new railroad; and often they came to the Divide to buy produce. But nothing could induce any "darky" to cross into the old County that will claim no African as a citizen. The Italians crossed over. They would have ventured into the jaws of death for a lamb, a chicken or a goose. So the mountain farmers found a ready sale for their produce, and a right good price they got for it.

Morgan and Jake Lambert had quit cutting bushes for the surveyors. Of late they were seldom seen about home, and their visits to Gordon Martin's store became less frequent. Old Josiah could not understand why Morgan had quit coming to prayer meeting and to Sunday School. He was

afraid that he had already fallen from Grace. But Roy Garland understood his absence.

The two stout mountain lads still worked in their fields. Though melancholy and sad, Roy toiled each day by the side of his light-hearted friend. Life had lost all its brightness for him, it seemed; but with the hope that the darkness would eventually vanish, he did not despair. So the two labored on—one happy with the thought that he had redeemed himself from a wicked, vicious life, and the other sad and silent with the thought of having been rejected by a moonshiner's daughter.

In the evening after the day's work was over, Floyd and Maude would walk in the fields or around the Divide; and Roy would sometimes accompany them. He could not bear the presence of the engineer. He hated to see him making love to Flora. Slowly he would walk behind Floyd and his sister and contemplate the great workings of Nature.

One evening in August the three took their accustomed walk; and, as usual, Roy walked behind. So slowly did he walk that the two lovers left him alone. The lonely sad youth was glad to be left to himself. The sun was sending his parting rays through a gorge in a mountain of red clouds. The usual purple haze hung over the far-reaching West Virginia hills. A gentle breeze stirred, and the leaves whispered

softly and soothingly over the boy's head. He thought of many things. He went back to the former days—back to the days when neighbors said that civilization had not come to the hills. He went back to the days when he was but a child; and as a child, he roamed, in fancy, over the old, old hills before they had received a foreigner into their peaceful detphs. Sweet, indeed, were those old days. The old days that were gone had their vices—he knew that—but they were very few. Moonshine whiskey was their worst evil. It had caused nearly all the feuds and crime of that time. But were conditions any better now? Was there any less whiskey now than there had been then? Was the still any worse than the saloon? Why would the Government send men into the mountains to cut up the stills and shoot down the moonshiners or carry them away, and then allow on the old still site a saloon? Was this railroad building, this pouring in of foreigners, this riff-raff from the Old World — was all this civilization? Could it be that true civilization was beset by so many evils? Surely this was not civilization. It must be only progress. Capital had not set its greedy eyes on the mountains for the purpose of civilizing their natives. It wanted only to fatten on their wealth which they could not enjoy. That greedy vampire was sucking the life blood from the hills. It was

mangling their forests and boring into their very hearts. Ah, scarred and cheerless would be the old hills in a few decades.

The sun had gone down and only a faint glow marked the course of his departure. The boy looked to the eastward, and one pale star was shining in infinite space. In rapid succession several rumbling reports sounded down on Dry Fork. The graders were blasting on the grade for the new road. They were working night and day. Then the piercing cry of a freight engine on the Clinch Valley line came to him on the still evening air. He looked down on the hills again and thought once more of the old days that were gone—the days when those peaceful hills were undisturbed by the iron monster with breath of fire. He thought of the old mountain hunter who breathed his native air undefiled. He thought of the once-pure womanhood of the hills, when it was unmolested by "slick-tongued foreigners." Again the wailing neigh of the iron horse and the clattering din of rapidly revolving wheels sounded distinctly. Then he wondered how mighty must have been the hands that fashioned these hills—how much mightier than the puny ones that built the locomotive whose sounds had just died away.

He rose to follow the absent couple, but saw them coming and waited for them. "God has almost forsaken these mountains,"

he said, aloud. "But I think He will come back here to dwell sometime. This thing they call civilization is bringing in countless evils—more evil than good. It is not civilization. Capital and foreign criminals are not going to civilize this country. It is up to the more intelligent people to do that for his unfortunate neighbor. We must work the change ourselves."

The boy and the girl came up; and together the three went toward home, listening to Nature's myriad voices. The moon had risen large and white; and under its kindly light the two gay lovers tripped lightly over the stones, hand in hand. At their heels the girl's stout, manly brother trudged, thinking, still thinking. He was thinking of the old days that were gone, and of something else.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE lord of the Lambert cabin sat patting a lean hound, while his wife, a thin, slatternly woman, prepared their meagre supper. Jake was seated near-by, oiling his pistol. He did not know that Floyd Winston and Maude Garland had been walking that evening, but he had heard that they were in love with each other. Jake and Maude had grown up together; and ever since they had been schoolmates, the tall, awkward lad had cherished an ignorant hope that he and Maude would one day marry. Never had the girl given him so much as a word that could have justified such a hope; but Morgan had always told him that he could get her for a wife, if he would only try, and he believed that "Pap" knew everything.

The lean, pale woman called them to their supper of bacon and beans and "roasting ears." After taking a drink from the big red bottle that stood under the bed, they obeyed. As they ravenously devoured the bacon and beans, the moonshiner, moved to eloquence by the drink from the red bottle, proceeded to instruct his son in all the arts and tricks in courtship.

"I wuz onct a boy," he said, "an' now I am a good deal older 'an you air, my son. Now, I want to tell ye, ef ye air ever a-goin' to try to git that air gal, ye've got to put in, er that sneakin jail bird is a-goin' to beat ye outen 'er. I'd be ashamed o' myse'f, ef I wuz you, to let sich as that go on."

Morgan helped himself to another plate of beans, and then continued: "Uv course, the ole man Jack aint murch account, but that ar gal o' hisen shore is a dandy—she is shore. An' now, son, ef ye'll take the advice yer pap gives ye ye'll go right to that gal to-mor' an' lay the whole case afore her. To-mor' is Sunday an' the whole fambly will be purty apt to be at home; so that will be the best time at' ye kin git."

He cut himself an enormous piece of bacon, and went on: "You air a good deal purtier 'an that ar sneakin Floyd Win'son; an' then, asides, you aint never went to jail, an' th' aint nobody knows we air a-stillin now. So, ef thet gal has got any sense, hit'll all be a easy matter. Uv course, ef she don't accept ye, she's a dadblamed fool, an' ye wouldn't want 'er nohow."

Supper being over, the father and son each took a large chew of their "long-green" and got themselves down to an earnest talk. Morgan still caressed the same hound, and spat his tobacco juice against the soot-begrimed wall.

"Thar aint but one thing 'at will be in yer

way," he said, rolling his quid over in his mouth, "an' that is that ar brother o' hern. He's a dadburned fool anyhow; an' ef he ever gits to foolin' with ye. hit'd be my advice to go at 'im about right. The young feller knows better 'an to monkey murch with yer pap; but some way or other, he don't like you. Ef I wuz you, I wouldn't take murch offen him."

"I'll fix 'em, pap," Jake said, and then grew silent.

Again the big red bottle was brought out, and in a little while the contents had been emptied into the stomachs of the big mountaineers. Both grew very talkative, and it was understood that Jake should start early next morning to see the girl, whom he was so sure he would make his wife.

About sunrise he started with a big revolver in one hip pocket and a bottle of whiskey in the other. As he went up the ridge, he took four or five big drinks from his bottle and fired a round into a tree. Morgan had told him that unless he got full, he could not talk to the girl as he should. So he resolved that he would follow "pap's" advice to the letter.

But he needed not to go to Uncle Jack's in order to see Maude. At the old schoolhouse he met her with Roy and Floyd Winston. The boys had started off without a gun, and each feared that they had made a mistake. It was not the first time that the

girl had seen a drunken man, but she was frightened. On toward them swaggered the young moonshiner, cursing Floyd and reaching for his revolver. But as the Winston boy did not reach for his own, Lambert did not take it from his pocket. When they came face to face, Jake caught Maude by the sleeve and rudely pulled her away from Floyd. The girl uttered a little scream. Roy throttled him and Floyd took his gun. He turned fiercely and, pulling his bottle from his pocket, threw it at Floyd, missing his head narrowly. Terribly enraged at this, Floyd flew at the drunken brute and knocked him down as easily as if he had been a corn stalk. After giving him a severe pounding, he lifted him to his feet, and giving him a parting kick, sternly bade him go home. Jake obeyed. Thoroughly sobered, he made his way back without either whiskey or gun. The two boys and the girl went on to the post-office, whither they had started, and Jake went straight home and told Morgan all that had happened and some more.

"That devilish Roy Gyarlan' an' that infernal Floyd Wins'on robbed me," he said. "Roy took my gun an' poked it down in his pocket, an' Floyd drunk the last drop o' my licker afore he took it away from his head. Then they both jumped on me and beat me pert nigh to death; an' that gal pulled great wads o' my hair out. Then, when they got

through wi' me, they all went on to the post-office."

Vowing the most dreadful vengeance on the two boys, Morgan picked up his Winchester and started to hunt them. At the old schoolhouse he met them coming back from the office. He walked up very close to them and boldly told them that their time was up. Again the girl screamed. The boys said nothing, but both saw they were in danger.

"You snakin' jail bird," he said, looking straight at Floyd, "don't ye know better 'an to treat a boy o' mine that a-way?" He cocked his gun, threw it to his shoulder, and with the muzzle close to the boy's breast, pulled the trigger. But, instead of a report, there was nothing but the click of the hammer as it drove the firing pin into the empty chamber. Morgan was drunk when Jake came home, and in his hurry and drunken anger, he had forgotten to throw a shell into place. The moonshiner looked at the gun for a moment and started to throw a cartridge into the chamber, but before this could be accomplished, Roy whipped Jake's revolver from his own pocket and held it steadily against the moonshiner's heart. Floyd took Morgan's gun and ejected the cartridges, then put it back into his hands.

"Take this," he said, "and you go straight home and stay there. If either of you act

as you have this morning, we'll kill you—that's all. Now go."

Morgan looked at the big revolver and the steady hand that held it, and started to say something; but Roy interrupted him:

"Don't you make one threat; if you do, I'll kill you now."

Mogan laid his empty gun across his shoulder, gave his red mustache a twist or two and started. When he reached home, Jake had refilled the red bottle; and the two set to work to re-empty it.

"Jake," said the elder Lambert, "we'll git them two young devils yit; and to bring it all out right, we'll do some robbin' ourselves."

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE mail came and went each day be- carried on horseback by Lawrence Ba- tween Lookout and Burkville, and was ker, a dwarfed lad of sixteen, whose father was a convict in the state penitentiary. Two offices were located on the route between these two places—one at Gordon Martin's store, and one at another store six miles farther down the Divide. The distance from Lookout, the western terminus of the route, to Burkville was fifteen miles. The carrier always started from Lookout at eight o'clock A. M., and returned at five P. M. If a neighbor wanted to mail a letter, he would usually wait somewhere on the route and deliver him the envelope and the necessary money to buy the stamp, which would be placed on at the next office.

Bernard Forest, the engineer, had for a long time bought whiskey of Morgan Lambert on the credit system. At last the moonshiner, though much afraid that he would offend his customer, asked him for his money. Forest told him, though falsely, that on the following Thursday he would get his last three months' salary by registered mail; and that, on the arrival of same, his account should be paid in full.

Wednesday morning found the engineer very sick. So sick was he, that he did not go out to work. He said he would not work any more until the next Monday. In the evening he walked out to Gordon Martin's to hire a horse the rest of the week. A little horseback riding would do him good, he said. He got the horse. The merchant hired him one at a dollar a day. Before he started back to Uncle Jack's, he mailed an envelope, on which he had forgotten to write the name of the state.

That night Morgan and Jake Lambert oiled their guns and cut some holes in a couple of bandanna handkerchiefs.

"Yes, Jake," said Morgan when the task was finished, "we'll do some robbin' our-s'ves."

The next morning the two passed Gordon Martin's store. At a lonely spot far from any house they watched the mail carrier pass, going toward Burkville.

* * * * * *

Flora had taken her book and gone on her usual morning's stroll. The engineer had started off for a ride; but the two boys and Maude remained with Aunt Nellie and Uncle Jack.

Instead of walking through the fields, as usual, Flora took the Divide road and overtook the engineer, who was waiting for her to come along. Without a word, he rode up to a log, from which the girl mounted be-

hind him. In a moment the eloping couple were galloping toward Iaeger—toward the train.

About eleven o'clock the boys got their guns and started on another squirrel hunting jaunt. They stopped at Martin's store and got the mail, and then went leisurely on around the ridge. They saw the mail carrier coming two hundred yards ahead, but he did not see them. On he came, whistling a gay mountain air. But the tune stopped in his mouth when two men with red bandannas tied over their faces stepped into the road before him, with Winchesters pointed at his heart. The boys ran at their utmost speed, hoping to catch the robbers before any injury could be done the carrier, but they were too late. The dwarfed lad, unacquainted with danger, reached for his gun; but before his hand could touch his pocket, two bullets pierced him and he fell into the road dead. Roy and Floyd both discharged their guns at the ruffians; but they were yet too far off to do them any bodily injury with their shot-guns. One of the bandits snatched the pockets from the saddle, and both darted off through the brush.

Roy stood by the body, and Floyd mounted the carrier's horse and rode rapidly toward the post-office. Gordon soon arrived on the scene of the tragedy. Others soon gathered; and the boys and Gordon started in hot pursuit of the criminals.

Their tracks were plainly visible in the soft earth; and these the pursuers followed to the end of the spur, where they found the pockets cut open and many envelopes and papers scattered about. All the letters had been opened; and so hurriedly had it been done, that many were simply torn in two. In examining them, Floyd found one on which he recognized the handwriting of the engineer. It was the letter he had mailed the previous evening, and it had been returned to Deerlick post-office for correction of address. The writer had failed to write the name of the state on the envelope. Floyd opened it and read the following:

"Deerlick, Virginia, August 28, 19—.

Hon. P. J. Hill,
Memphis, Tenn.,

Dear Sir:

I shall leave the mountains to-morrow. If you have procured my divorce, please write me at Cattletsburg, Ky., as my affianced will accompany me there. We shall stay in the above named place until I hear from you.

Thanking you for your expected reply,
I am,

Very truly yours,
Ralph W. Fields.

Floyd handed the letter to Roy, and while it was being read a puzzle of long standing was solved. He knew now when and where

he had seen the engineer. It was when he was arrested. It was he who had shot him. He thought he was certainly the biggest fool in the world. Why had he never recognized him before now? But he knew him now. That was enough.

The letter said that he would leave the hills to-morrow, and it was written the day before. To-morrow was now to-day. And he had as good as said he would get married soon. That was now plain, too. He had ridden off that morning, and Flora had gone on a pretended walk. She had run away with him—that was all.

Roy had never seen the engineer until he came to his home to board, but when he read the letter he understood it, too. The eloping couple had started early in the morning, and it was now past noon. They had reached the station before now. But then they remembered that the west bound train did not leave Iaeger until five in the evening. They might yet have time to catch up with them. Anyway, they would try. Paying no more attention to the recent tragedy, they sped like arrows up the spur, jumped on the carrier's horse, and dashed around the ridge. Reaching home, they hurriedly saddled the big blacks, and mounting these, they galloped off toward the railroad station. Twenty miles of rough mountain path lay before them, and they knew they must lose no time if they

made it. Both lost their hats, and both received rough treatment from the branches that grew across their path. Terribly bruised, they reached the river road, where they let their horses breathe a few minutes. Their way was not so hard now. They could now make two miles easier than they had made one coming down the mountain. They were almost sure they could reach the station by five.

On and on they galloped in single file, never slacking for a moment; and they came in sight of the station at exactly five o'clock. The train was just pulling out as they rode up. Before they could dismount, it had gone so far that the tired and bruised lads could not overtake it. With rage and despair, they watched the receding iron monster turn a curve and go out of sight.

Then they thought of the water tank. It was a half a mile down the track, and the train would necessarily stop there. In an instant they were on their perspiring horses and galloping after it. The bell was ringing when they dashed up to the tank, but they were on time. Dismounting and throwing their bridles over the pommels of their saddles, they dashed up the steps as the engine was pulling out again.

Some of the ladies screamed with fright as the two wild-eyed, hatless youths came into the car. The engineer and Flora were seated in the rear of the car, and the girl

was weeping. With no weapons in sight, the mountaineers started up the aisle. The engineer looked up and saw his enemies. He blanched with fear and drew his pistol. He guessed that Floyd now recognized him, and he was afraid that the results of that recognition would be terrible. Jumping to his feet, he leveled his pistol at Floyd and did what he had done once before, in the old days that were gone. His bullet passed through the fleshy part of the mountaineer's left arm.

He attempted to fire another shot, but slipped the lock of his automatic pistol. Before he could find the trouble, the strong mountain boy laid his heavy hand on his shoulder.

"Give me that thing," said Floyd, reaching his almost paralyzed hand for the gun. The engineer obeyed, and Floyd tossed the little weapon of polished blue steel out of the window. Speechless and almost fainting, the little engineer sat down again.

"Who wrote this?" sternly asked the ex-convict, holding the letter signed by Ralph W. Fields before his eyes. The engineer was so much surprised that he could not answer. Then it was passed to Flora, who was blushing with shame by his side. Her attitude was suddenly changed. The man with whom she was running away was none other than the drunken officer who had shot Floyd; and now he had tried again to kill

him. She did not know that her brother had been wounded by the bullet. Poor, miserable girl. She had strayed from the beautiful path in which she had always walked. How she longed to throw herself at Roy's feet right there in the car.

Floyd turned to her and said: "It is now up to you. Will you go on with this man, who has ever been our enemy; or will you go back to the home that has sheltered you ever since this ccoundrel came to do his part in ruining our people?"

Without speaking, she went to her brother's side; and led by Roy, the two walked toward the door. The engineer looked at the girl for the last time. He had been thwarted in his plans by two mountain boys. It was too much. Of course, the train had stopped when the shooting occurred; and it had not yet started again. The window was open by his side. He must get even with that mountaineer. He still had another pistol in his pocket—a small revolver. Cautiously he pulled the tiny nickel-plated weapon from his pocket and fired a bullet into the facing of the door by the side of his intended victim. Floyd pushed his sister to the platform and turned in the door. Another bullet cut a lock from his temple. His enemy sat down and rested the weapon on the back of the seat. The mountaineer saw that it was time for him to act. The old passionate fire that

burned in the breasts of his pioneer forefathers flamed up afresh. Deliberately he drew his big forty-five from its holster; and with a deafening report, sent a big bullet through the engineer's body. Fields fell forward and died.

Floyd went immediately and gave up. After a careful trial before the Mayor of the little town, he was acquitted. It was proven that he was justifiable in the deed, and there was no need to bother the county court.

On Saturday the two boys and the runaway girl came back home. Instead of scolding her, Aunt Nellie threw her withered old arms around her, and the two—the old woman and the girl—wept together.

CHAPTER XIX.

WHEN Roy Garland and Floyd Winston came back home they found themselves resting under suspicion of a terrible crime. The boys had taken their guns and gone out about eleven o'clock in the morning. They had been the first to reach the mail carrier after he had been shot. They had witnessed the shooting at a distance, and had seen one of the robbers snatch the pockets and dart through the bushes, with the other at his heels. The carrier had been shot twice and it was said that the bullets were not the same size. Roy and Floyd each had a pistol that day, and they were of different calibres. Old Josiah bodly declared that the robbers had been none other than the Garland boy and the ex-convict Floyd. Gordon Martin was present when they found the pockets, but he had not noticed the letter, which had been signed by Ralph W. Fields and returned to Deerlick for correction of address. All he knew about it was that the boys left suddenly and without warning. Some of the neighbors had seen them mount the dead carrier's horse and dash away. Gordon had seen the tracks of two men, and

had followed them down the spur where he found the pockets cut open and rifled. The boys could have taken them down there and robbed them, he thought. These boys were sharp, he said. The tracks could be followed no farther than the end of the spur. Perhaps they had walked back to the road in the impressions made by their feet as they went down. He wouldn't say that the boys did it, but it looked suspicious. He knew nothing of the letter, and could not understand why they had run away. He guessed they had taken a scare, and probably they had scouted a day or two. Then, maybe, they had come to the conclusion that they could cover it all up. Hence their return.

Some said that Morgan and Jake Lambert were guilty of the crime; but old Josiah would not believe it, although he and the merchant had seen them pass the store early in the morning. He said he guessed Morgan *had* fallen from *Grace,* and was, perhaps, making moonshine whiskey. But, notwithstanding all this, he said that Morgan would not have done a thing like that. He simply could not believe it. But Floyd Winston, he said, was a mean, sneaking boy. He had been in jail and in the penitentiary, and had been a moonshiner. His father before him had been a moonshiner. It was in the breed. His wickedness was inherited, he said.

But Josiah forgot that in his earlier days —the good old days that were gone—he, himself, had operated a Government still. But he was protected in that. That was different. The Government sent a man, who placed on his kegs a little stamp. And besides he had to pay a tax. He was freed from all blame.

But, as Roy Garland had said, whiskey was whiskey; and whiskey made in a Government still was no better than that made in a moonshine still. It was not the still that hurt; it was not the glass nor the bottle; it was not the wood in the walls of the bar-room. It was the whiskey; it was the product of the still; it was the fluid drained from the glass or the bottle; it was the rattle-snake venom stored against the walls of the bar-room. And whiskey was whiskey, no matter where found or how made—and it was the whiskey that hurt.

So the days passed on, and the suspicion against the boys grew stronger. The news of the engineer's death soon spread far and wide. Floyd was a regular terror, some people said—a moonshiner, a convict, and a murderer. Morgan and Jake had disappeared, but it was the general belief that they were at their still.

Under the suspicion that was daily growing stronger, the two boys were arrested and taken before Squire Luke, a black-eyed, black-whiskered man. Gordan Martin's evi-

dence was taken first, and in his droll humor he recounted what he knew. Then four or five other witnesses were sworn and took the stand in their turn; but their evidence was worthless. The two accused boys were sworn next; and after each had told the whole story, including the trouble with Morgan and Jake, Floyd presented the letter signed by Ralph W. Fields, and explained that the writer was the man who had shot him long ago. He had been working in the mountains all the while, under the assumed name of Bernard Forest. When his story had been told, the Squire no longer believed the boys to be guilty.

Maude Garland told under oath of the trouble with Morgan and Jake, to which she had been an eye witness. Then Flora was brought in to give the final testimony. The engineer had told her how he had lied about the would-be money, which Morgan and Jake believed would come in the mail on the day of the robbery. She said that Fields had been uneasy about the carrier. He had told her that with the two moonshiners believing money would be in the pockets, the carrier was in danger. The Squire and all the bystanders, including even the Martins, were now convinced that the sanctified Lamberts were the murderers.

To complete the evidence, one of the men who had helped strip the carrier brought in the bullets which had lodged in his clothing.

They were both 32 calibre Winchester slugs, and had been either shot from one gun, or each had come from guns of the same bore. Morgan and Jake each had a 32 Winchester. Floyd's revolver was a large 45 Colt and Roy's was a small 32 Smith & Wesson. So the boys were dismissed, and the crowd went away fully convinced that the bullets had come from the Winchesters of Morgan and Jake.

CHAPTER XX.

MORE than a hundred times each day the thin, slatternly woman in the Lambert cabin went to the door and looked longingly up and down the road. Her husband and eldest son had been gone since the day they rushed into the house, grabbed up a handful of cartridges, and then rushed out again, telling her to ask no questions. They were gone, and now she knew why; but she looked and longed for them to come in. The cabin was a desolate place. Her supply of bacon was running low. Her beans were drying on the vine, and her "roasting ears" were hardening. The children were almost naked, and autumn had already come. Hers was, indeed, a hard life. She must have some aid; so she went to old Josiah Martin. But the cold refusal in his nasal twang grated so harshly on her feelings that she cried and wiped her eyes on her cotton apron. She went next to Gordon and laid her distressed condition before him, but he turned her away with a joke. Then around the ridge she went to Uncle Jack's. She hated to appeal to the family that her husband disliked, but something had to be done. The children were suffering. Aunt

Nellie received her kindly and sent her away with a heavy load of provisions. The woman went home with a lighter heart; but still she went to the door many times each day and looked anxiously up and down the road.

* * * * * *

Dreamy autumn, dreary, wailing winter, and balmy, musical spring each had passed away in its turn, and now 'twas summer. Flora had asked Roy to forgive her, and he had done so. She was sad, and the boy pitied her. Her cheeks, he thought, were fading. Her eyes looked innocent and large, and had that same wistful, pleading gaze. She looked like the Flora of long ago—the old days that were gone. The girl would still blush with shame, but that shame was not now due to her father's and brother's disgrace. It was something else. Again the big, blue, pleading eyes and the pale face found a place in the boy's imagination. They were beckoning, pleading as they had done in the sweet old days that were gone.

The four youngsters again took their walks as they had done when the engineer first came to the hills. Flora was, at last, able to understand that strange feeling for Roy, which had so long puzzled her. When the boy again talked to her of his old love, she let him understand that, if he would fully forgive her, he might call her his wife.

The same evening he received that glo-

rious intelligence, the four walked to the old graveyard on the Knob. Roy's happiness was complete. The old hills had regained their charm for him. God had come back to dwell in the hills.

The roses on his little brother's grave were in bloom—the same old roses, whose sweet perfume the little ragged girl smelled that terrible night long ago. In place of the sandstone, on which she sat that night, another yellow mound swelled up. Under it Mont Winston fulfilled the ancient prophecy which has never failed: "Unto dust thou shalt return." The girl looked at the graves, and her eyes dimmed with tears. If her father had taken her advice, he, perhaps would still be alive, she thought. But then she thought of her own life since his death, and found a fault with *it*. *It* had not been perfect.

The Garland boy and the Winston girl sat down under the tall cedars—those whispering, mourning guards for the dead—and watched the glories of the departing day. The sun was invisible, being hidden by ever-changing mountains of red clouds, which sent their towering crags and pinnacles far up into the gold-illumined western sky. The peaks of the fiery mountain gradually settled down to gentle slopes and swells and the sight became more enchanting than ever. Slowly—very slowly—they rolled and tossed themselves, tearing into

ten thousand particles of spray, then, recollecting, they settled down to one solid lake of molten gold.

Twilight brought out night's creatures, and in countless quavering voices, they took up their oft-repeated song. The light from the fiery lake had simmered down to a faint glow. One dim, pale star twinkled in the northern sky. The moon came up from behind a dark bluff and flooded the forest with her white, tranquilizing radiance. The night was warm, grand, dreamy. Ah, yes, God had come back to dwell in the hills again. An owl thundered over on the Divide. Was it the same one that hooted over there that awful night long ago? The boy and the girl were silent. Both were back in the old days that were gone.

Slowly the moon, broad and white, rose up in the pallid sky. From moonlit spur and shadowy cove came the plaintive call of whippoorwills, blending softly with the song of night's choir.

They looked over at the Divide. A light was shining through Uncle Jack's window —just like it had shone that night long ago. Flora placed her dimpled arms around the boy's neck and pressed her lips to his own. The strong, healthy lad held her firmly to his breast; and close together, their hearts beat together—beat as one.

Flora called Maude, who, with Floyd, joined her and Roy at the gate; and the

four happy youngters started homeward. At the corner of the old graveyard they stopped in amazement. Two dark figures were crouched by the wretched palings. Instantly the figures took the shape of men and straightened themselves before the astonished boys and frightened girls. Something bright flashed in the hand of each; and in one report two pistol shots were fired. Floyd heard a bullet close by his ear, and Roy felt the hot blood trickle down his face. The boys drew their own guns, and in quick succession, two more shots were fired. The villains dropped their glittering weapons and fell side by side.

The moonbeams fell fully on the faces of the ruffians, and the boys recognized their victims as Morgan and Jake Lambert. The hypocrites, the moonshiners, the murderers were no more.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE murderers had been laid to rest. Great excitement followed the kiilling of the Lamberts. It is always thus in the hills. There are always men who will sympathize with even cold-blooded murderers. After a man dies, some will say: "Well, he had his faults, but he was a good man." But the excitement soon passed off and all became quiet again.

In the early fall Uncle Jack made ready for two weddings. All the neighbors, without an exception, were invited; and nearly all came. The celebration of the two marriages was a jolly affair. It was conducted in pure old mountain style; and the table groaned under the weight of good, old-fashioned dainties, which were served out to the guests with a lavish hand. Uncle Jack made music for the merry-makers, and Aunt Nellie conversed with other old dames, and calmly smoked her pipe. But no whiskey was there. Uncle Jack had asked all in a friendly way to bring none, and his wish was respected.

All night the guests danced the good old mountain jigs. Few fiddlers could excel the old man on "Sourwood Mountain," "Old Dan Tucker," and "Jennie, put the

Kettle On." So, after a joyful time, the neighbors departed to their homes.

Aunt Nellie's secret wish was now gratified: Her children were married—Roy and Flora, and Floyd and Maude. She called the Winston boy and girl her children. She blamed herself more than she should have done for Flora's elopement with the engineer. She said: "People never gits too old to l'arn, and about the best thing fer 'em to l'arn to do is to watch their gals."

CHAPTER XXII.

THE few years that have elapsed since the closing scenes of this story have wrought wonderful changes in the old hills. Uncle Jack and Aunt Nellie have been laid to rest in the old graveyard on the Knob. Many, many of the good old men and women have been laid there and elsewhere to sleep the dreamless sleep. Many foreigners have made themselves homes in the hills. The very complexion of the hills is changed. The railroad on Dry Fork has been completed, and now it intersects with the Clinch Valley line. The moonshine stills are now few and far between, and the good citizens of West Virginia have voted whiskey out of their state. Lumber companies are still at work, stripping the hills of their timber. Scarred and cheerless are the old hills now.

But from the Divide the West Virginia hills look the same as in days of yore. The same purple haze—the same veil of mist—hangs over them still; and the sunset is no less grand than of old. Many of the old neighbors have moved away to distant states, among them, Gordon Martin. But old Josiah still lives at his old home. He is

the same old Josiah, and still wears his blue bandanna tied over his ears. Roy and Flora and Floyd and Maude have never moved away. They still reside in the hills, it makes no difference where, and it is said that they are happy.

The two young mountaineers help the thin, pale widow of Morgan Lambert clothe and feet her children, whom they were forced to make orphans, and they say she is very grateful. She goes no more to the door to look for her husband and son, for she knows they will come no more.

Often the two brothers-in-law walk with their wives to the old graveyard on the Knob; and in summer they deck some of them with flowers. Sometimes they remain there until the moon gets up and the whip-poor-wills and fall crickets and katydids begin their mournful song.

Both Flora and Maude are mothers now; and in their offspring can be traced the same rich blood that flowed in the veins of their Colonial forefathers. In their broad foreheads can be read the same intelligence that framed the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence. In their manly faces can be seen the same fighting spirit that made us a free and independent nation.

The brawn-and-brain of a great state has, through inactivity, fallen asleep. For years it has lain dormant in the old hills. After

that long, refreshing sleep, it is coming forth. The mountaineer's sun is rising; his day is dawning. Ere long such men as Roy Garland and Floyd Winston must redeem the old state from vice and regain for her the glorious name of her youth—the good old days that are gone.

A PAUPER'S RISE

A PAUPER'S RISE.

CHAPTER I.

ALL night a warm, steady rain had fallen, and the hills lay steeping under a dense, gray fog. The sun was just rising, and with rays greatly subdued he soon left the hilltops destitute of their misty shroud. Little by little the yellow light descended the verdant mountain wall of Dismal valley, crowding the vapor down to the creek-bed and up the opposite coves.

On top of a spur a tall, dark lad sat astride of a stake-and-ridered fence looking down into the valley below. No shoes were on his scratched and bruised feet, and his old straw hat was mended with willow twigs. Under him leaned his old musket—the rusted relic of his grandfather—and from his shoulder hung his bullet pouch and powder horn. Down there at the mouth of the cove to his right lived little Fay. Her father's cabin was not yet visible, for the fog still lingered about the mouth of the cove. He was afraid to go down there, for old Abe, the girl's father, had forbidden him to enter his house again. Abe Richardson was a dangerous man, and the boy

knew that it would not be safe for him to go down until he left for the mill. He always started about eight o'clock; so the lad decided that when he should see him leave the house, he would go down and have his last little talk with Fay.

The boy's father and mother were both dead, and since their death he had had no permanent home. In the summer any of the neighbors would let him work for his board and clothes, but in winter no one cared to have anything to do with him. All that summer he had worked for Abe Richardson, but now the old man had said that he and his daughter were getting too intimate with each other and had told him to go. He had started the evening before, but had gone no farther than where he now sat. He had slept all night there in a fence corner under a slab. He meant to slip down and tell Fay something, and then he would go, he knew not where. Being now sixteen years old, he felt sure that he could get a job somewhere and make some money. He had never touched a piece of money in his life. He thought it would be a mighty big thing to own even a dime.

He could barely remember his parents, but the scenes of their burials were vividly impressed upon his mind. He could remember seeing the great yawning graves, the long, rough coffins and the crowd of rough men and women that had been pres-

ent at each funeral. He also remembered the place in which he had lived for five years thereafter. He could still see the withered old women with toothless gums and the rheumatic, half-crazy old men who had been his companions in that place. The boy had been in the almshouse, and he was afraid that if he stayed in that neighborhood any longer Old Abe would send him back. When he had become old enough to work, the old man himself had brought him out to his own home. He had hired him out to the neighbors, and the money which the poor little boy had earned the old man kept for himself. Now he could make his home there no longer.

The sun climbed slowly up in the sky and drove the fog out of the valley. The cabin at the mouth of the cove could now be seen by the boy on the fence. A spiral of blue smoke rose in a feathery column from the kitchen chimney and vanished in the sunlight. Old Abe was watering his horses at the river and Fay was milking at the barn. How beautiful she appeared to the lad as she tripped about the barnyard in her little white sunbonnet. How he wished he were down there. But he could not go just yet.

When the old man had put the horses back in the barn he started down the river. He was gone to the mill. When he was out of sight, the boy slipped down

from the rail and pulled his musket through a crack. He turned around and saw Fay going into the cabin. Slowly and cautiously he dropped down the steep spur and went up to the door.

"I want somethin' to eat, Fay," he said, stepping into the house, and his eyes filled with tears.

The girl placed a lunch on the table.

"Where did you stay last night, Leon?" she asked.

"I didn't stay nowhars; I laid up yander on the p'int."

The girl looked away. She knew why he had lingered all night up there in the rain.

"You had better be in a hurry," she said, "fer pa forgot his sack a while ago, an' he's liable to come back after it; and ye know if he wuz to find ye here—." She stopped and turned her head away again.

"I'm a-goin' in a minute, my little gal," said the boy. "I jest come down to tell ye good-by. I've gotto go, an' I lowed I mought not never see ye any more, an' jest couldnt' go till I could tell ye somethin'. People don't seem to want me here any longer, so I reckon I'd better be a-goin'. I don't know whar I'm goin', but I'm goin' somewhars." He hastily finished his lunch, then picked up his old gun. "I hate mighty bad to leave ye, but I don't see no other way." He turned and faced the girl

and offered her his sun-tanned hand. "Good-by, little gal," he said, "ye see how hit is: Yer pa is agin us an' he has got hit in fer me. Ef ye can, try to think of me sometimes, fer I'll allus think of you. I'm a-goin' away, I don't know whar; but mebby some day—" He stopped and wiped his eyes on his short sleeve. When he looked up the girl was gone. As he stepped out he saw her standing in the chimney corner crying. He started toward the gate, but before he reached it, he heard the rough voice of Old Abe.

"Stop thar, boy," thundered the old man angrily.

Leon started to run and reached the gate, but before he could open it the big mountaineer had caught him by the shoulders.

"I thot I told ye to never come hyah ag'in," he shouted in the frightened boy's ear. That was not the first time he had spoken harshly to the boy, but somehow his words had a deeper meaning now than ever before.

The big man unfastened the gate, held it open for a moment and said: "Ef I ever catch ye back inside this here yard ag'in I'll take ye to the pore-house that very day. Now do ye hear? You be damned shore ye never show yer carcass roun' hyah again." Giving the lad a severe kick, he fastened the gate in his face.

Once more the boy turned his back to the cabin and started up the hill. When he had reached the top of the spur where he had sat that morning, he climbed again to the same rail and looked down again at little Fay's cabin. His last bright hope was now shattered. Where would he go? He knew not. Climbing down from the fence, he shouldered up his beloved old musket and started up the ridge. "I don't know whar I'm a-goin', but I'm a-goin' somewhars," he muttered to himself.

CHAPTER II.

THE day passed away sadly with little Fay. Leon could come to her home no more; for her father had already said so, and she knew he was a man who seldom broke his word. Many were the little hardships the boy had taken upon himself for her; but now he could never do her little errands again. He was gone—she knew not where. She guessed she would never see him again. It pained her much so see her father treat him so rudely, and she had cried almost all the time since that disgusting sight.

The old man scolded his daughter severely after the boy had gone. She ran out and cried again, and would not come back in the house until he had threatened to whip her.

"Hit looks like ye'd have better sense 'an to want to court one o' them low down Vances," said Old Abe. "Thar's plenty o' boys 'at aint paurpers ye could git. Ef ye wouldn't show that boy no friendship, he'd marry Lottie Harmon. That would be a purty equal match, an' nobody wouldn't have no objection to them a-marryin'."

Lottie Harmon's mother was dead, and

the girl made her home with Jonathan, her father's brother, who lived at the Bend a mile down the river. Jonathan's wife was Abe Richardson's sister, and was a very ill-natured, crabbed kind of woman. Lottie had lived in the family almost all her life, and had never known anything but hardship and cruel treatment at the hands of her aunt.

Jonathan was a merchant and had run his business on a pretty lively scale for four or five years. But, at last, he got in debt to numerous wholesale houses, and being unable to pay out, his store was locked. Suits for the recovery of these debts were pending against him, and court was close at hand. A rumor was circulated that Jonathan and his wife had carried goods out of the store after the wholesale companies had closed them out, and had hidden them about the house. It was said that the orphan girl had seen them do it. She was summoned to appear at the county seat on the second day of court to testify against her uncle and aunt, but on the morning she had expected to start she was missing.

The Post-office was kept at Jonathan's house and one of his sons was post master. The mail was carried on horse-back by Mose Henderson, who had been a squire, and who was a preacher of the sanctified belief. On account of his doctrine of Holiness and Sanctification, he was called "Holy

Moses" by everyone who knew him. Mose was a faithful mail carrier and was well liked by all.

After hunting about the place for a few minutes, Jonathan and his wife declared that the missing girl had run away and gone to her father, who was a fugitive from justice in West Virginia. That was reasonable. Neighbors believed that the bashful girl, rather than face the stern Judge and the inquisitive lawyers, had run away until after court was over.

Jonathan saddled his horse and rode off toward the county seat, satisfied with the fact that the chief witness against him would be absent.

The next morning big Israel Hopkins came down and said that he had had a dream. He had dreamed, he said, that his wife was drowned in Jonathan's mill pond. When he had been told that the girl was missing, he declared that his dream had come true. He asked permission to search the dam, but Jonathan's wife refused and ordered him to leave. "No," she said, "ef Lottie has drowned herself, hit aint in the mill dam, fer she wuz allus too 'fraid o' hit. Ef she is drowned at all, hit's in the hole o' warter down yander below the mill."

Perhaps big Israel had his dream with his eyes open, but vision or none, he began to make ready to drag the dam.

Israel had been living in the neighbor-

hood for four or five years and had come from no one knew where. He was of gigantic stature and had a savage face set with ox-like eyes and graced by a prominent nose which supported a pair of brass-rimmed spectacles, which were fastened to a pair of ponderous, protruding ears. He made his living by repairing clocks and sewing machines; and very often he made mysterious trips to nobody knew where. When all the timepieces had been put in good working order he had no trade, but he still remained on Dismal and made those mysterious trips. How he made his living after his trade left him, nobody knew.

His search was soon rewarded. After probing about in the water a few minutes, he succeeded in locating the girl's body, and dragged it to shore. Jonathan's wife went into hysterics. With loud lamentations she mourned the loss of her husband's niece.

The body was carried to the house and preparations for burial were hastily made. The news was quickly circulated and a large crowd soon gathered. Holy Moses came riding leisurely along after the mail and wanted to know why such a crowd had assembled. He was told that Lottie had drowned herself, and that they were making ready for burial. But then the meek, holy-looking countenance left his face, and in stern tones he demanded the interment postponed until a post mortem inquest could be

held. Two doctors and the necessary number of men for the inquest were at once summoned. Upon examination, it was found that her neck had been broken and no water had entered her lungs. She had not died in the water.

Jonathan came riding in while the inquest was being held. The body was taken to the cemetery for burial and Mose was asked to conduct the funeral services. In his prayer he made such fiery appeals to the Almighty to show who had committed the crime that Jonathan's wife fainted. She and her husband and Grant Richardson, who had stayed at Harmon's the night the girl was killed, were arrested and taken to jail immediately after the burial.

With tearful eyes, all pleaded their innocence and insisted that Leon Vance had been the slayer of the girl. Old Abe Richardson upheld them in their argument. He said there was meanness in the boy's head when he left; and so darkly did he paint the lad's reputation, that Big Israel was sent to hunt him and bring him back.

CHAPTER III.

ON up the ridge went the tall, ragged lad. He was leaving everything behind that was of any importance to him. That was just one little girl—Fay Richardson. Often he stopped and leaned on the muzzle of his musket and looked back—back toward her cabin home. The house itself was out of sight, but the steep fields, the high cliffs in the Bend and the mountain road were still visible. Over there in those fields and on top of those cliffs he and Fay had played together when they were small children. Over there in those fields thy had rolled rocks down the hill and watched them splash into the river below. Over on the cliffs they used to sit and cast acorns and pine cones into the clear, shining water at their base and down there at the mill they had sat side by side many a day and cast their hooks for the beautiful bass.

The most miserable being must have some fond recollections, and it makes no difference how sad has been his life, there are days in his memory which will cause his heart to leap with joy. The present, no matter how sad and bitter, becomes sweeter as it is buried beneath vanished years.

The boy was leaving many friends—not human friends, for he had but one. But the old cliffs, the trees, Old Abe's big black dog, the beautiful, shady river and Fay were his friends, and he was leaving them—leaving them all.

He walked steadily on until he had reached the top of an elevated knob. It was high noon, so he would stop there and take his last look at his old, faimliar haunts. He would leave the ridge there, cross the little creek to his left and pass over the next spur of the mountain, and then the next until he should come to somebody's house—until he got "somewhars." He stopped and dropped the breech of his gun to the ground and rested his hand on the muzzle. Far down the valley he could see the row of white cliffs and below them the river shone like a mirror in the sun. As he stood there he took a picture. His thin legs and the old musket were the tripods; his head was the camera; his dark eyes were the lens and his brain was the sensitive plate. He gave the exposure sufficient time to bring out all the details. In the hidden recesses of his mind he would preserve that picture as long as he lived.

All evening he trudged on over hills and across creeks and marshes, and at late twilight dragged his weary limbs up to the door of a mountaineer's cabin. He found

lodging in the cabin that night, and early next morning he set out again.

The Hardwood Lumber Company was at work on Knox. The boy had often thought of going to them for a job. They were now close at hand, so to them he went. The foreman hired him to throw rocks out of the road for the teamsters, and he set to work, glad with the thought of having got a job. He had been at work just a week when big Israel Hopkins came into camp and inquired for him. Rather reluctantly the foreman surrendered up the boy, for he had proven a faithful hand from the beginning.

Court was still in session in the county seat. Jonathan and his wife and Grant Richardson were still in jail, and now big Israel placed Leon in with them. Next day came the examining trial. Jonathan and his wife each pleaded not guilty and said they knew Leon Vance was the murderer. They stated that he had tried to get Lottie to marry him, and, upon her refusal, he had threatened to kill her. He had been driven from Old Abe's two or three days before the killing of the girl, but they said they guessed he had slipped back and done the work and then had gone again.

When Grant Richardson was brought before the Judge, he swore that Jonathan's wife had killed the girl with a chair. She had been trying to get the girl to run away,

he said, until after court, but this she had refused to do, whereupon, the woman jumped up and struck her on the back with the chair in which she had been sitting, killing her instantly. Terribly frightened, Jonathan took the body and threw it over the cliff into the river. That was all.

Richardson and Leon were released and Jonathan gave bond; but his wife was allowed no bail. Jonathan went back home and Grant Richardson took a bee line for West Virginia. Leon returned to his work.

At the November court Mrs. Harmon was found guilty of the murder and was given fifteen years in the state penitentiary. Everybody thought that Jonathan should go with his wife, but surprising to all he came back home a free man.

CHAPTER IV.

THE foreman gave Leon back his job. The boy was a steady, honest worker. In a little while he learned to drive horses and took charge of a team. For a year he worked and then went to school. He had never been in school before, and for a few days he was in an embarrassing situation. All his classmates were tiny children, but he meant to put himself in the class of larger boys and girls before the school was out—and he did.

After the school had closed he again took charge of his team. The team foreman resigned, and so much interest had the boy taken in his work that the Superintendent gave him the place. But he could not go to school now and hold his job; so he bought books and took them to his room, and in his leisure hours and at night he studied them. At the end of two years he had been promoted to general woods foreman. After another year the Superintendent decided to give him a change by placing him in charge of the Company store.

Leon had grown very tall, and a commanding appearance he made in the fash-

ionable clothes he now wore. Many a young woman would have gladly become his wife, but the boy still remembered what he had started to say to Fay the morning Old Abe drove him away from his house. Now and then he could hear of the girl, but he was lost to her. The old man was sending her to school at the county seat, and the boy read in the county paper of the high grades she was making. He guessed she had forgotten the little boy whom her father kicked out of the yard long ago.

It happened that the Company owned a large tract of timber land on Dismal. Over there two miles above the Bend they would set their mill. When they were ready to begin operations there, Leon was asked to take charge of the job, and he accepted. Under his wise guidance active work was soon going on.

Abe Richardson came up one day and modestly asked the young Superintendent for a logging contract. "I 'spose yer name is Vance," he said, offering Leon his big hand. "We've got a few Vance's aroun' hyah, but I don't reckon you air no kin to them." Then the old man asked for the job, and the Superintendent told him that he might go to work. Old Abe invited the young man to bring a party of young people down to the bend on the following Sunday. When the old mountaineer had re-

ceived a promise to come, he went back home much pleased with the "big boss."

"Fay," said he, "they've got one o' the finest fellers fer a boss I ever seed, and the beatenest thing about hit is he's a Vance. He's got a ugly name, but I reckon he must be a different breed o' dawgs to these 'roun' hyah. Hit jest seemed 'at he couldn't be good enough to me, an' he has done an' promised to come down to see us nixt Sunday. You must be mighty nice an' put on yer best dress, fer he shore is a nice-lookin' feller.

Sunday morning came and Leon and his party set out to see the beautiful scenery at the Bend. When the pleasure seekers had entered the narrow gorge, all were awe-stricken, but none could see in that narrow little valley what the young Superintendent could. "Mebby some day," he said to himself as they came in sight of Fay's cabin.

Abe told his daughter to go with the party to the top of the cliffs in the bend. Leon helped her up the bluff, and the girl wondered why he was so silent when the others were so gay and talkative. But the boy was thinking. He was thinking of the two children who had in earlier days climbed the same bluff in the same fashion. When they had gained the top, he looked down at the clear, leaping water. Ah, what glorious thoughts were associated

with that pure, cool stream. But the girl did not know that the tall, well-dressed young man at her side was the same little ragged boy who used to roam those wild crags with her.

The two sat down under a small pine and the man picked up a cone and tossed it into the river below. The girl found an acorn and dropped it into the water, and as it touched the surface, Leon saw tears starting in her eyes. The faint little splash awoke in her a longing for that little old ragged boy. She watched the tiny waves receding in ever-increasing circles from the spot where the acorn had been dropped. In her mind time's sluggish waves were likewise parting, leaving exposed the days long gone when that little boy had done the very same thing by her side.

"Do you come up here very often?" he asked.

The girl hesitated a moment and said: "I used to come almost every day, but now—" She paused and threw another acorn over the cliff. "But now I seldom come."

Leon looked up the river. Up there he could see the same rail on which he had sat the morning he said good-by to Fay. When he looked again at the girl, tears were streaming down her cheeks.

"Why do you cry?" he asked.

"I—I was thinking—of a—little boy," said the weeping girl.

"Tell me about him," pleaded the young man, "but perhaps he was a brother of yours, or a sweetheart, maybe, who fell over these rocks.

"No, no," sobbed the girl, "he was not a brother, neither was he a sweetheart; and he never fell over these rocks, but it might have been better for him if he had. He was a poor little boy who never had any chance in life, and father treated him badly. He went away and a foul crime was committed by my aunt. They accused him of being guilty and brought him back. He was not guilty—I knew he was not—but he went away, and I have never heard of him again. We used to come up here and throw acorns and pine cones over into the river, and the way we have been doing here reminds me so much—" She could not finish her story, for she saw that he was weeping too.

He put his arm around the girl's waist, but she tried to take it away. "Don't you remember what he said," he whispered softly; "Mebby some day?"

The girl looked surprised, but Leon drew her closer to him and said: "The poor little boy is all right—don't you see he is? Leon Vance is my name."

The girl was unable to speak. She only gave way to the strong man's embrace and nestled like a child in his arms.

Next Sunday he came back again. In the evening he asked Old Abe a question.

"Well," said the old man "hit's a mighty short courtship, but I reckon hit's all right."

So the wedding day came and Leon and Fay were married. After the wedding, which was conducted in pure old mountain style, Abe's son-in-law told him a story. As he proceeded with his narrative, the old man smiled and frowned alternately, but the smiles were by no means pleasant, and the frowns were not at all menacing and threatening as they had once been.

When the story had been concluded, Abe slapped his jeans-clad thigh and laughed long and loud. "Well," he said, "hit does beat the devil how things will turn out sometimes."

THE HUSKING BEE THAT DECIDED

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CHAPTER I.

LATE in the evening of a crisp, dry October day.

On an intersecting spur of the Great Divide stood a low, log cabin, and from its brown stone chimney a thin column of blue smoke drifted lazily upward in the dreamy autumn air. To the right of the cabin, in a steep cove, lay the cornfield now bleached and cheerless. Its crop had been gathered, and now nothing remained but the dry stubble. To the left, in another cove, a spring of cool water bubbled forth in a clear stream which found its way into a log milk house. A narrow path led from the spring to the cabin, and up this path Minnie Wilson, the country school teacher gracefully walked, carrying a wooden pail .of the sparkling water. After taking her burden in the house, she took her seat in the doorway, and for a time sat watching the sun go down behind a mountain of red clouds. To-night was the husking bee, and in an hour the crowd would be gathering. All evening preparations had been going on inside the

house: The old mother was busy in the little kitchen baking her pies and sweet potatoes, and the father and the boys were at the barn rounding up the pile of corn in order to accommodate the large crowd which would surely be there.

George May, who was teaching a neighboring school, would be there. She had been flirting with May, and she feared that he and Claude Davis, her first sweetheart, would have trouble. Claude was a mountain boy of twenty, and had been her constant companion since both were mere children. She knew she was treating him wrong, but somehow, that gay young fellow from a distant state had gained her affections, and she was a little perplexed, for she had always loved Claude, or at least, she had thought she did. She was troubled, for both would surely be there. She had risen and was just turning to go inside the house, when a cheery "hello" caused her to turn her pretty head. Before the door stood the polite little teacher smiling and bowing with his soft black hat in his hand.

"Mr. May," said the blushing girl, "you really surprised me. I didn't see you at all until you spoke. I'm so glad to see you—come in." And she led him to a rude rocker, and bade him be content, making some apologies for leaving him alone by telling him that she must help her mother.

The crowd of youngsters were coming.

A full moon had risen, and the multi-colored forest looked dreamy under the white, misty light. The huskers came slowly up the lane singing "Little Brown Jug."

With a pang of shame, Minnie saw Claude lead the way into the yard. What would he think of her when he saw that finely-dressed young man in the house? This would be their first meeting, and she knew it would be an unhappy one for Claude, if not for both. She herself had invited May, but she had let her father invite Claude. Her mother had told her that it was a shame to treat the best boy in the neighborhood in that way, and now she knew it was the truth. Everybody knew that Claude loved her, but who knew anything about this foreign young fellow who might be versed in flattery as well as in politeness? Claude had been invited to the husking and May to the party which was to follow; and it was evident by his spotless linen and well-brushed suit, that it was for the party only that he had come.

The crowd entered the cabin, and their leader, Claude Davis, without pausing went straight to the kitchen. Taking a seat by the stove, he sat for a time in sullen silence.

"Minnie," he said at last "who is that high falutin' feller you've got in there? He wanted to be so dad-burned polite and jumped up so quick and sudden, that he

come durned near crackin' his head ag'in the j'ist."

"Oh, Claude, that's Mr. May who is teaching at the Johnson schoolhouse. He is such a nice man. Come, you must meet him."

"No, never mind," returned the boy, "I don't keer nothin' about gittin' acquainted with 'im. Guess I'd better be goin'."

"You'll do nothing of the kind," hurriedly replied the girl. "Why, Claude, you're so jealous. Now you sit right back down." And she pushed him gently toward his recently vacated chair. With silent obedience, he resumed his seat and sat looking blankly into the moonlight.

Supper over, the crowd—all but May—proceeded to the barn where, until near midnight, they worked with all their might husking the golden corn. The scene can best be pictured by quoting these words from Whittier:

"Swung o'er the heaped-up harvest, from pitch-forks in the mow,
Shone dimly down the lanterns on the pleasant scene below;
The growing pile of husks behind, the golden ears before,
And laughing eyes and busy hands and brown cheeks glimmering o'er."

When the last ear had been husked, the crowd hurried to the house to begin the rollicking dance. Claude Davis came to the

door, but no farther, for on the bed Minnie and George May were sitting close together. With deep regret, Minnie heard the gate close behind her first lover. Painful, indeed, were his rapidly retreating footfalls. "He will never forgive me," she thought as his muffled tread died away in the distance.

CHAPTER II.

THE fiddles were now tuned and the dancers took the floor. For half an hour the merry mountain air: "Sourwood Mountain" enthused the tireless dancers to do their very best.

The fiddlers stopped, and the perspiring dancers dashed outside to cool.

"Low bass," cried one of the musicians, "let's tune fer "Soldier's Joy." The next dance had just started when two pistol shots rang out down the Divide. The music suddenly ceased and two or three of the boys ran out and emptied their revolvers into the air. In the mountains a man is considered a coward if he hears a shot and will not reply.

"Claude's tryin' his gun," said one of the young mountaineers.

"Yes," said another, "he's a-trying' to banter Mr. May, fer he looked at 'im as mad as a ole settin' hen jest about the time he left."

"I don't care for his bantering shots," said May, "it only shows his breeding. He wants us to know he has a gun."

The old mother turned a frowning face toward the speaker, but said nothing.

The fiddlers now resumed their music and May and Minnie took the floor. The mountain boys loked on in envy as the handsome young man danced so gracefully. After a few minutes of vigorous playing, the musicians again stopped, and a loud "hurrah" rang out as four horsemen rode up to the gate.

CHAPTER III.

WITH a heart full of jealousy for May and bitter anger for Minnie, Claude climbed the steep spur to the Great Divide. Reaching the ridge road he stopped. The dance had begun. He could hear the merry music of the fiddles and the noisy dancing of his friends. Minnie was down there dancing with another man, he guessed. How could he ever bear it? He had loved her passionately for years and had honestly believed that she loved him. But now had come the final test. She had surely deceived him. What could she see in that little, pale, tender weakling? He was educated but to what extent he knew not. Perhaps he had just education enough to teach school. That wasn't much, for Minnie had been teaching, and he knew that her education was very limited. Perhaps he knew no more than Minnie. But education was a matter of very little importance to him, so he resolved to come back next morning and whip the little dude within an inch of his life.

When the music in the cabin had ceased he started sullenly down the ridge. The broad, sandy road stretched out before him like a muddy stream. An owl uttered his midnight call, but he heard it not. He

shook his fist in rage at the light that was shining in the cabin as he heard another dance begin; then shutting his ears to the irritating noise, he ran for a hundred yards or more, but stopped in amazement at the sounds of the pistol shots.

"Some drunk fool," he said aloud, "they'll have hell down at ole Dad's yit."

Scarcely had he uttered these words, when a boisterous laugh and several oaths greeted his ears.

Partly to avoid trouble, and partly from the instinct to eavesdrop, he stepped behind a large chestnut tree and watched four riders go by. A few yards farther up the road all stopped and a large bottle was passed around. Claude recognized in the group of ruffians Devil Lige Lawson and his two red-headed sons, Rile and Eli. The other was a stranger. The Wilsons and the Lawsons had been life-long enemies, and never had any dealings with each other except to deal exchanging blows. It was only two years ago that old Lige had killed one of the Wilsons from the bushes, and only a month ago old Dad Wilson had made old Lige and his two red-headed sons show him the soles of their "brogans." Claude had been constantly in touch with both clans, and probably knew more of their designs than anyone else. He was sure that they were now up to some mischief. Perhaps they had heard of the husking bee, and

were now on their way to clean them out. This prediction was confirmed when he heard old Lige say, "Yes, by God, we'll have the whole damned family, corn shuckers, fiddlers and all to give us a trot."

"I knowed the ole guy was up to somethin' mean," said Claude, stepping back into the road.

The storm that had been raging in him had now subsided. He was no longer angry with Minnie. The feeling of anger had given way to one of fear. He feared for her safety. He hardly knew what to do. It was too late to slip around the ruffians and apprise the merry-makers of their danger, for the scoundrels were nearly down to the cabin already. To call would be less than useless with such noisy hilarity going on inside. Consequently, he knew nothing better than to walk along behind.

The dancing had ceased. The party had ridden up to the gate. A loud "hurrah" came from old Lige's bearded throat. It was then that Claude stepped unseen behind a fodder stack near the house. At the unexpected taunting cheer, three or four young mountaineers came out into the yard. The riders had dismounted and were hitching their mules to the fence. Then, uninvited, they came up to the door of the cabin and passed the bottle in full view of all inside.

"Lord o' mercy," exclaimed the old mother, "hit's them Lawsons."

Minnie's eyes flashed and May's lofty countenance lowered.

Old Dad Wilson's towering form appeared in the doorway. "Men," he said, "we'll have no licker here to-night; an' ef that's you, Lige Lawson, we'll not have you. Git—" The last sentence he never finished, for a stone from the hand of red Eli Lawson landed with tremendous force in his face. Like a mighty oak, he fell backward to the floor. Over the prostrate giant rushed the drunken brutes; and behind them came a fiery-eyed lad with a big black Colt's in his hand. The merry-makers were terrified. Through the kitchen door they vanished—all but May who escaped through the only window.

"Gimme a buss, little gal," said red Eli, approaching the horror-stricken Minnie. But that coveted prize he never gained. The fiery-eyed youth stepped before him at this juncture and sent a forty-five calibre bullet through his body.

"Hell," yelled old Lige, raising his unsteady arm and firing at Claude. But Lige was too drunk for an accurate marksman, and his bullet went point blank. Before he could draw the trigger again, the big black gun was again brought into execution, and old Lige died in the house of his life-long foe. The two others, Rile and the stranger,

rushed again over the prostrate giant, this time to life and liberty. As quickly as possible they mounted their mules and dashed away in the moonlight.

The husking bee was now over; the dance was over; the fight was over; the lives of two of the bad Lawsons were over, and a courtship recently begun, too, was over. Old Dad was nursed back to life, and his injuries proved to be nothing worse than a badly smashed nose and a few loose teeth.

Next morning the bodies were carried away to the Lawson cabin. Late in the same day they were buried, both in one grave, with all the simple solemnities of the mountains.

CHAPTER IV.

A week later Claude came to Minnie's home again. He had had his trial, and of course, had come clear. Old Dad was able to be out again; and George May had not been heard of since the never-to-be-forgotten husking bee. The mountains were not for him.

It was the first of November, and the Election excitement was getting intense in the hills. The old mother received the boy warmly, but could not say a word. She only looked at him kindly, while a torrent of tears rolled down her furrowed cheeks, and patted him gently on the shoulder.

"Can you ever forgive me?" asked the girl. "Speak, dear, and let me know the truth. Oh, I'm so ashamed. I am not worthy to wash your feet. Tell me quick."

The boy only laughed in reply. "Come," he said "and let's me and you walk up to the Divide—the mornin' is so nice."

Without a word, she flew to his side and, hand in hand, they climbed the steep spur. Nearly all the leaves had fallen. A purple haze, the herald of Indian summer, hung over the hills. At the top of the spur they found a seat on a mossy knoll and sat for a time with dreaming eyes. A squirrel barked

hoarsely up the Divide and a flock of crows flew awkwardly over them.

"We've been up here together before," said the girl, "but not until now did I know I had a boy with me who would risk his life for me."

"Darlin'," returned the boy, "I'd resk anything fer ye. What's my life without ye, anyway? I jest brought ye up here to ask ye that old question you've heered so often —wont ye marry me?"

"I wanted to ask *you*," said the girl, "because I've treated you so mean. Yes, I'm not worthy of you, but you're mine and I'm yours—yours always."

"I'm happy now," said the boy.

"Kiss me, dear," said the girl, and she put her arms around his neck and looked into his love-lit eyes.

"Let's go," he said. He got up and gave her his hand. Laughingly he helped her down the steep path to the cabin, and their smiling faces told the old, old story to the old parents and made *them* happy.

A few days later, in the full glories of Indian summer, the old "Hardshell" preacher came and made them one.

THE SPOOK CHIMNEY

THE SPOOK CHIMNEY.

ALL evening I had been lazily lounging in the hammock on my friend's porch, smoking and watching the saw mill hands hauling slabs and dust to be burned. I had tried to read several times, but as often, I would fall to dozing and drop my book; therefore, I gave that up as a bad job, and gave my undivided attention to my pipe and the mill hands. The porch was pleasant, very cool and shady, and the hammock was exceedingly comfortable; so I found it hard work, indeed, to prevent myself from falling into the deepest sleep.

The house was old-fashioned and large, being one of the big, roomy cabins built by the early Pioneers. It contained several large smoky rooms, with unusually high ceiling festooned with great swinging masses of cobwebs and soot. Since I first came to visit my friend and cousin, who was occupying the house temporarily, I had been inside the kitchen but once. The weird, dark interior of that old room had left a strange, unpleasant impression on my mind, which I was utterly unable to cast off. I had always been a strenuous objector to a belief in the supernatural, so I was not willing to believe that the house was

haunted. But, in spite of all my materialistic views, I continued to rehearse to myself all the stories of goblins, spooks and fairies I had ever read; and the longer I pondered over them, the more real they became. As I had always hated superstition with so merciless a hatred, I was getting angry with myself for allowing such silly thoughts to enter my mind. But how was I to help it? I had become almost unable to think of anything else but wizards, demons, ghouls, and the Evil Eye.

The sun was shining under the eaves of the porch on a portion of my body, producing, I thought, a faint, dizzy sensation in my feet and legs. I think I had lain so long in one position, that my lower extremities had become slightly numbed; but, nevertheless, I thought it due to the sun, as it was shining very warmly on my temporarily paralyzed limbs.

Again I began to doze, and my confused thoughts developed my over-wrought fancy into what seemed unmistakably real. All manner of strange, ugly creatures filled that old kitchen, it seemed, from floor to rafters. Big reptile-like birds without feathers, and enormous bats flitted through the smoky atmosphere, uttering a loud, unharmonious kind of song somewhat like the creaking of rusty machinery.

When I woke, the sun was shining full in my face; and, for a time, I was unable

to move my feet or arms. Of course, when I had recovered the proper use of my limbs, I got up; but, by some strange influence, I possessed an almost irresistible desire to climb the old kitchen chimney. Why such an insane fancy had entered my head, I could not tell; but I imagined it to be the influence of some genie or goblin, which I was now sure existed in or about the house. I meant to say nothing about my foolish design to my cousin's wife. I would try to be contented until she went to the post-office for the mail; and, during her absence, I would climb the chimney. But, in my plans I was to be thwarted. She asked me to accompany her to the office, and insisted on my going. I was in a dilemma. I could not possibly refuse going on such a silly excuse, for I was ashamed to tell her of my preposterous purpose; but, silly as it was, it was the greatest task to refrain from rushing madly up the log wall by the grimy flue. With the greatest reluctance, I walked to the office with my hostess; but I do not think I spoke while on the way. Mad as was my desire to climb, I dreaded it more than any adventure I had ever undertaken; yet there was an unpleasant something like a painful duty that goaded me on toward my purpose.

When we had started back home, I could linger with my friendly companion

no longer. With a mad dash, I made toward the house and reached it in a few minutes. Straightway, I went to the kitchen to begin my climb. The chimney was built close up to the wall on the inside of the room, so it would be no trouble to climb up, as the cracks would give me a fairly good ladder. There was a dark aperture several feet in diameter around the old chimney, the sooty ceiling seeming afraid to touch it. Without hesitation, I started up. I ascended very rapidly, and in a few moments, passed the joists into the dark, musty garret. This queer room was very tall in the middle, for the gable was unusually steep. When I had gotten well up from the ceiling, I began to feel very suspicious and uneasy. Looking down, I thought I must be at a frightful altitude, as high as Washington's monument, perhaps. I was frightened, and tried to return, but it was impossible. I was being propelled upwards by some unseen force. My movements had all become involuntary, and I could no more have prevented my steps than I could the beating of my heart. Under the roof a pigeon door let in a little light—just enough to enable me to see the chimney and a few other objects very indistinctly. Directly above me, and barely in reach of my hand, the chimney tapered abruptly, the shoulder being somewhat like that of a bottle. Still involuntarily, I put

my hand on the shoulder and felt some very cold fingers. Immediately a very large, black genie, with a white spot on the top of his hairless head, looked down into my eyes. Still against my will, I was drawn upward by the same irresistible force until I was face to face with the spook. Again I looked down, and everything was pitchy darkness. A rafter leaned very invitingly nearby, so I grasped it eagerly with one hand and held it tightly. The genie was visible only from his waist, the rest of his body being hidden in the chimney. From all indications, he was a prisoner.

When I saw his helpless and equally painful position, my heart was touched with pity for even this ugly spook. The chimney had certainly been built on his body. After contemplating his diabolical features for a while, I ventured to address him:

"My friend," said I, "you seem to be in a very painful situation; but pardon me for speaking a few words of sympathy, for I am sure your spookship could free yourself should you be so minded."

The genie raised his head for a moment and looked straight into my face. He was so ugly and misshapen that it made me shudder to look at him; but, despite his frightful-looking countenance, I was touched with pity. He was sorely in need of some relief.

"Poor old spook," I thought, "I wonder if you would as much as thank me, if I should release you?"

The reptile-like, featherless birds flitted fearlessly about me, even lighting on my shoulders. I had never seen any like them, but they corresponded exactly to my ideas as to how prehistoric creatures looked. When I would move very suddenly, they would fly off through the darkness, uttering that strange grating song:

"Murky and a-lurky, darky oh, starky,
Rash, crash, boodle um boo."

When these strange songsters had disappeared in the darkness, I again made bold to speak to the spook.

"My friend," I continued, "is there any way in which I could relieve you from your prison? You seem to be very uncomfortably situated."

With an effort, he again raised his head and looked at me. I think my countenance was far from good while I was being contemplated by this frightful-looking fellow. I trembled so violently, that I feared I would lose my grip on the rafter. Soon his lips began to move hesitatingly, as if he was going to speak.

"Speak, kind goblin, spook or genie, or whatever may be your name," I said, "don't be afraid. I want to aid you, if I can."

"Well," he said,—his voice was very harsh and squeaking—"if you will do as I

tell you, you can relieve me; and, by so doing, you may bring a priceless blessing on yourself. But first, you must promise that you will not be afraid to do as I bid you."

"I give you my promise," said I.

"Listen then to a little history," he continued. "I was at one time the slave of a wicked wizard, who built this house. I am the genie of the woods, and my brother, who is a prisoner on the other side of the chimney, is the genie of the river. Both of us were this wicked wizard's slaves, and now both of us are prisoners of his chimney. We always went hand in hand; and as long as we were thus united, he could work any miracle with us; but when the clasp was broken, we became almost powerless. Our master used us in his devilish art until he was about to be hanged. He saw that he would be forced to give up his wicked profession or die on the gallows; so, in order that no one else might use us, he separated us and imprisoned us in this chimney."

He dropped his head languidly as if he was going to expire. Then I looked around the corner of the old chimney to make sure he was telling the truth about his brother, the water genie; and, sure enough, he had said truly. A similar looking spook was likewise a victim on the left hand side of the flue.

"Now," he said, "if you will re-unite our hands, that will restore our power to us,

and we will be able to escape. But listen, now, and take heed to what I tell you. Be very careful that each of our hands do not touch you at the same time. If you should be so careless as to let that happen, our magic would be conducted to you, and you would become a magician. You must not place your hand between ours so that each of ours will touch yours; for, in that case, your hand would act as a connection, and you would become possessed of a spell which you could never be able to cast off. But, if you do as I tell you, you shall be able to free us; and as your reward, you shall have the good fortune to be able to resist all charms and spells that others may try to put upon you. With our clasp broken, we had just sufficient power to induce you to climb the chimney. We chose you, because you are an unbeliever in the Black Art. If you had been a believer, you would have been too timid. Our slight power would not have been sufficient to force you up. On the other hand, you would have run away from this house. After you have released us, you need never fear the supernatural; for it never harms anybody except those who believe it."

I was bold enough to take hold of the genie's hand and draw it toward me. It was icy cold, and I shivered as I held it; but I could not shrink from my task. I lay it on a projecting stone of the chimney,

palm upward, then took the hand of his brother and dropped it into it. In an instant they were united in a firm clasp. Their color immediately began to pale, and before I could have counted ten, they had grown slightly transparent. The strange, reptile-like birds returned with a mighty rush, darting hither and thither around my head, uttering their weird song louder than ever.

"Murkey and a-lurky, darky oh, starky,
Rash, crash, boodle um boo"

they repeated over and over, each repetition growing five times louder than the preceding one. I was fairly deafened with the unpleasant song, and totally blinded by the dust they were raising. In a minute or so, the song suddenly ceased. When I had rubbed a quantity of dust and grime out of my eyes, I looked for the genii, but they were gone. During that disgusting hullabaloo they had vanished.

Sowly I began to make my return backward down the wall by the chimney. I found it very difficult to keep from falling; and I think it took me three times as long to make my descent as it did to go up.

When I landed on the kitchen floor, my cousin's wife was very much surprised, and I believe a bit frightened to see me coming down from the garret all covered with dust and soot. I explained to her that I had chased an enormous rat into the loft and

that I had been lying for him a long time, trying to shoot him. She looked as if she doubted my veracity; and several times during the remainder of my visit, she asked me to explain why I had deserted her so rudely as we were returning from the post-office. Consequently, as I never could think of a reasonable story to tell her, I have written this chiefly to satisfy her curiosity.

THE LEGEND OF OAKVIEW

THE LEGEND OF OAKVIEW.

DOWN in Virginia, through a certain county of that romantic old state, stretches a wide, fertile valley; and down this valley flows a beautiful stream, twisting itself in snake-like coils between labyrinths of verdant alders and willows. Whoever journeys up or down this valley can not fail to notice the numerous cosy farmhouses standing well back from the highway, with vine-covered porches and an air of peaceful comfort about them. Stout, healthy farmers may be seen sitting on these shady porches, puffing their corn-cob pipes or playing with the babies, while the housewives are busy at their numerous household chores. But none of these, however, can claim the traveler's special attention.

Away up on an overlooking river bluff stands a strange old structure which might cause him to stop and wonder. It is no model of architecture, but is just a plain old stone mansion with steep gables covered with various climbing vines.

Let us take a stroll around the old homestead and see for ourselves why the place could deserve such attention: First we come

to the entrance which is two tall rough stone pillars standing some fifteen feet apart. From this old gateway, leading well up to the porch, spreads a broad gravel path; and on either side stand tall oak trees which arch their luxurious branches over the pathway, forming a complete roof over it. Around the old building is a grove of stouter oaks growing close up to the walls, and hanging their friendly boughs over the decayed roof.

The hall door stands ajar and seems to be inviting us to enter its dreary chambers, whose sole inhabitants are gaunt, giant rats. We are at once convinced that many times has this old portal been forced back and forth by idle winds since any human foot has crossed its threshold; and that many have been the blasts that have whistled around those bleak walls since any human found a home therein. The panes have all been shattered. Directly beneath each old window a crystal heap has been formed by the falling glass. The sash is green with moss; everything has a weird, ghostly look and a mouldy smell. The dark interior gazes down on us through the cheerless apertures with such a gloomy visage that we should not be at all surprised if some ghoul or demon should insert a skeleton hand through one of those wrecked windows and beckon us off his premises. Therefore, with little reluctance, after tak-

ing a circuit around the "haunted homestead," we turn our backs on it, but more than once we look back to see if we be pursued by a ghost.

We shall now revert our story and go back some four score and ten years to recount some of the history of this old house.

* * * * * *

About the year 1820, when England's bitter hatred for this country—the result of the War of 1812—had somewhat subsided, there sailed to Virginia, from London, a certain Sir Edward Palmer, a man of considerable means and a small family, having only one son. This son, Thomas, was well educated and was extremely fond of country society, having spent a portion of his life in rural England. Growing tired of city life, the old gentleman had decided to sail to Virginia where he would become a planter and end his days in the domestic quietude of the country.

Landing in Norfolk, he left his wife and son in that city and proceeded to the grazing section of the state, where he found what he was looking for in the plantation of Oakview. The owner, a Mr. Thompson, wished to go to the city where he might give his children better educational advantages than the country afforded, so he sold the old manor and plantation to the Englishman. A deed was at once drawn up, conveying plantation, slaves and all the farm property

to the city gentleman, and soon the former owner was comfortably located in Richmond.

Sir Edward took possession, and, despite his city notions, the farming went on admirably well; for he kept the old overseer, and, fortunately, the slaves were faithful and obedient. Young Thomas took wonderfully to his new home. All the neighbors soon admired him. They liked those good English people almost as much as they had liked Mr. Thompson.

Before the Palmers had been in Virginia a year, the young man met Mildred Stuart, the daughter of a rich neighboring planter. She had just returned from college, and was extremely beautiful and equally sweet-tempered, so it can not be wondered at if she was her father's idol. The young Englishman was charmed with this Virginia belle with every quality of the Southern lady, and he was not at all slow in declaring his love to her. She received him coldly, but respectfully at first, but her polite respect for him soon changed to affection, and in the course of a year they were engaged. The wedding was a merry affair. Conducted in pure old Virginia style, it must have looked ridiculous to the old English parents who were to receive this planter's daughter as their child.

When the wedding was over, the young man and his bride started on their honey-

moon trip. Going first to Norfolk, they visited some friends there; then, boarding a ship, they took passage for the groom's former home—London. For half a year they sojourned in the land of his birth, and then, with light hearts the two made their return voyage. On reaching home, they settled down to the quiet life of the plantation. Time flew by on lightning wings for two years, and then a baby brightened the old manor. Stella was the name they gave the child who was the very picture of intelligence. Very rapidly she grew in strength and beauty. Every rose that bloomed around left its color in her cheeks; the lily left its whiteness in her forehead, and both left their odor on her breath. Her eyes were the color of the sky, and her hair was like threads of gold. She was the angel, aye, the shining light of Oakview; but, as we shall see, she was needed to shine away the gloom which more than once hung like a dark shadow over their home, for a succession of sad deaths were to occur therein.

The good old English woman had for a long time been in delicate health; and in the autumn of the tenth year of their residence in the Old Dominion, when the forest had put on its variegated colors, she fell asleep. She was buried on a grassy knoll close at hand, beneath a clump of willow trees, and ere long winter spread a spotless blanket over her and the wind mourned round the

plantation a funeral dirge. A sad home it was for months thereafter, but the gay, sweet, innocent child laughed the grief away. All were happy again—at least, the young parents and the child—but it was but short-lived. Before the spring had chased the ice from the hills Sir Edward, the bereaved old widower, contracted pneumonia from a sudden change of weather, and, after a few days' illness, succumbed to the disease. With reverent hands, his body was laid by that of his wife, and soft tendrils of grass and tender creeping plants grew over their graves. The young man and his wife were crushed by the shock, and to add to their troubles, Stella's health was failing. The rosy hue had left her cheeks and the cherry had departed from her lips. Her round, full form was becoming lean and spare, and a slight cough was setting up. The doctor was sent for, but he shook his head mournfully and said that consumption was in an advanced stage. So the weary months rolled on, and the girl still grew weaker. The sad parents could see the willows beckoning their child to a bed beneath their drooping boughs. When the red roses were blooming and nodding their heavy heads in the breeze, the flower sweeter than any of them withered away and died. She was buried by her grandparents, and now the grief of the young father and mother knew no bounds. Neighbors visited them

and tried to comfort them, but they refused to be comforted, and would not leave the old mansion even for an hour. No solace could they nor would they find. At last friends ceased to visit them. The old overseer left, and nearly all the slaves were set free. One morning it was announced by one of the remaining slaves that "marster" and "missus" had disappeared. All the country round was searched, but they were not found. Never was the slightest rumor circulated as to where they had gone. They could not have been carried off by Indians, for *they* had long ago ceased coming into the valley. Not one had been seen there within the last ten years. They could not have been murdered by some offended slave, for the slaves were left to do as they pleased, and never had the slightest cause for offense. Their disappearance has ever remained a mystery, and old darkies firmly declare that they have seen the weeping couple walking about the place at night. The wild ghost stories of the Negroes, told of the "Lost Couple," have furnished amusement to many a child and have been the means of entertainment around many a cheerful fire.

For years these stories grew and were circulated among the darkies; and many, too, were the whites who would not deny their truth. Then came the great Civil War. At its close, the haunted homestead was far

more fortunate than any of its neighbors. While others were being ruined and demolished, the haunted house was unmolested.

During the painful period of Reconstruction, when Black Dominion seemed inevitable in the South, these wild stories grew more wild and terrible than ever. The Negroes declared that they had seen lights shining through the windows, and that they had seen shrouded horses with breath of flame standing under the trees around the old mansion. They also told of seeing terrible beings of mighty stature, clad in the most grotesque robes, and terminating at the top in a peak like a church spire.

The truth was that the ill-treated citizens of that section belonged to the Invisible Empire, and were holding their weird meetings in that dreary old house. They knew the reputation the place bore among the darkies and took advantage of their superstition by allowing themselves to be seen by them occasionally.

That romantic old order, regarded by most people as evil, has long since passed away. Good or bad, it frightened the idle Negroes into submission to their old masters and proved a priceless blessing to the overpowered but unconquered South.

The old state has built back again on her ruins; but vague stories are still equally prevalent among the white people and the black concerning the old homestead and its lost owners.

MOUNTAIN WORSHIPERS

MOUNTAIN WORSHIPERS.

THERE are no other people on the earth who enjoy going to church any more than do the mountaineers of the South. Mountain parents often hire their children to be good with the promise that they shall go to "preachin'" on Sunday. As Saturday evening approaches, the little urchins leap with joy at the thought of the morrow. To-morrow they will put on their best clothes and go with their fathers and mothers to hear the old elder tell the story of a child who came to earth long ago to be nailed to the cross. And the old as well as the young look forward to the coming Sabbath with a child's pride. Often the old and infirm will walk a dozen miles to hear an hour's discourse from their beloved pastor, and then walk back home for dinner.

I remember being present at one of these gatherings, and it was there, I believe, that I saw an earnest spirit of religion. It was in mid-summer, and the God whom they truly worshiped had blessed them with a perfect day. The place of worship was on a little wooded island in the middle of a clear mountain stream. On either side of the islet the crystal water leaped over the stones and

made a musical sound which was restful and soothing to the ear. The outdoor church was a grove of birches and hemlocks walled in by a hedge of rhododendrons and roofed by a tangled growth of wild grapevines. The old preacher had already arrived and was seated by a small table. On the table reposed his well-worn hymn-book, and in his hand he held his little black Bible. He was waiting for the crowd to gather. He reverently turned the pages of his beloved book, and then his lips moved slowly as he read. Laying his open Bible on the table he carefully placed his hymn-book on its soiled pages and began to look over his audience. Old dames puffed their pipes and talked pleasantly with one another. The rich aroma of the tobacco reminded me of incense burnt in the ancient temples. Feathered songsters flitted and chirped in the fairy church; and, so deep and tranquil had been my meditation, that I imagined each to be an angel.

The preacher rose, and after a few words that were nearly inaudible, started a hymn. He seemed to wear the very countenance of Christ. The sublime, peaceful smile which was upon his face, I have never been able to see again. His long patriarchal beard and those heavenly features caused me to look up to him as a being not belonging to this world.

His introductory remarks were low, deep

and rich. Like music, they fell upon my ear. As he proceeded, his voice grew mighty, but full of tender appeal and pleading. The birds sat still on their perch overhead and the slight summer breeze seemed suddenly to stop. My blood became as cold water as he gradually dropped to whispering accents. I looked around. The crowd was petrified for a moment, and then such a burst of tears as that which followed I have never witnessed since.

In his mountain dialect he painted to his enraptured congregation the beauties of a well-spent life and the horrors of a wicked one. In closing, he spoke in pathetic terms of the beloved dead—those who had departed. The mothers who had buried children could contain themselves no longer. With clapping hands, they fearlessly expressed their happiness and submission. The preacher closed his sermon, another hymn was sung and the service was over. "'Tis God's own temple," I said as the audience was breaking up.

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